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CHARLEMAGNE,

OR THE

CHURCH DELIVERED.

AN

EPIC POEM,

IN TWENTY-FOUR BOOKS.

BY

LUCIEN BON PARTE,

Of the Society of France, &c.

TRANSLATED

BY THE REV. S. J. BUTLER, A. B.

AND

THE REV. FRANCIS HODGSON, A. M.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA:
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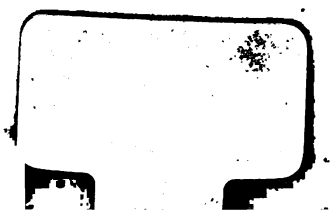

Stephen Emmens. 1826

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CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XIII.

FROM THE FIFTIETH TO THE SIXTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

Return of Charlemagne. Rebellion of Gaiffre of Aquitania. Funeral Honours of Roland.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XIII.

I.

ERE yet the sun commences his career,
Sets forth the monarch and each valiant peer:
The encampment's bounds already they forsake,
And raise their standards o'er the Triple Lake: (1)
The towers of Como to their right are past, (2)
And round Lugano's wave their coursers haste;
They climb the hills whence fair Olona flows, (3)
And near the Greater Lake, at evening's close,
Within Valdona's ancient walls repose.

II.

When Brennus held Italia's conquered land, (4)
Valdona grew beneath the chief's command;
Still in her friendly sons the warriors trace
The cherished memory of their Gaulish race:
But, with the dawn, across Ticino's wave,
The heir of Pepin, and his chieftains brave,
To Gothard's mount their banner'd lines advance; (5)
The Rhone, so dreadful in the fields of France,
Here a poor stream, not yet its force attains,
Leaves its lone rock, and gently bathes the plains.

III.

E'en to these vales the warlike Pepin tried
To spread his empire's ever-growing pride:
The fierce Helvetian, whom no conquest broke,
Fled to his mountains to escape the yoke.
Charles, by the mildness of his just command,
Back to their cottage roofs recalled the band;
And now again their peasant toils they ply,
Foes to misrule alike and tyranny:
Blest, that the hero's guidance they obeyed,
They dwell in freedom by his guardian aid.

IV.

Forth from the shelter of each peaceful home,
To gaze upon the king in crowds they come:
But soon their spirits for the battle burned,
And culture's instruments to swords are turned.
From Tesin's source to Aar's mountain wave, (6)
Our glittering march excites the rustic brave:
In Basle's proud walls the increasing crowds are shown,
And Charles beholds ten thousand swords his own.

V.

The love of nations who obeyed his laws,
Thus ever lent new vigour to his cause:
Scarce on the field of May was war declared,
When subject millions for that war prepared:
Charles, ranging all the mighty realm about,
Divides his present energy throughout;
Informs the body with one active soul,
And sheds a radiant glory o'er the whole:
Quicker than danger, like the wind he goes,
And carries off the conquest from his foes.

VI.

Roused by her king's return, all France appears...
Montfort collects his scattered cavaliers,
And leads his standard to Helvetia's heights;
Soon, in the royal camp, his faithful knights
Their guardian monarch hail;... but, close at hand,
The Saxons, pouring through Nemetia's land, (7)
On Rhine's affrighted banks their rage display,
Led by their prince and Rodmir to the fray:
Concordia, Strasbourg, and the circling towers,
But late have yielded to the conqueror's powers.

VII.

Now to his aid fierce Theudon brings his ranks,
Already marching up the Danube's banks:
With thirst of plunder fired, the swarming band
Draws near the bounds of Tassillon's command.
Three nations, leagued with bold invasive arms,
To Neustria's bosom bear the wars alarms
In one dread hour: but, slowly on its course
Moves on the Hun's innumerable force;
And ere false Tassillon betray his lord,
He waits for Attila's o'erwhelming horde.

VIII.

Skilled in the baseness of that wavering mind,
To valiant Montfort's hands the king consigned
The task to watch Bavaria's treacherous train...
In that vast forest's solitary reign, (8)
Whose depths from Basle to Vindel's towers are spread,
Concealed 'mid dark ravines and valleys dread,
The observant troops are placed... then swiftly back
Charles turns his march to meet the foe's attack;
Apprised that now their sanguinary band
From Felda's heights descends upon the land. (9)

IX.

Each hour the Franks some new ally behold
Beneath their banners eagerly enrolled;
And Pepin's son, impatient of control,
Breathes prayers for battle in his burning soul.
Oh, that his foes collected for the fight
Would rush, this day, upon his dauntless sight,
One mass of arms! Vain ardour of the brave!
Italia's fields e'en now his presence crave;
For victory there the Lombard's hope restores,
While the fierce Moor through Aquitania pours.

X.

Gaiffre, Theodebert, have bowed their reign,
Toulouse, Bordeaux, beneath a Moorish chain:
Sheltering their guilt with Carloman's great name,
Their former kingdom for his sons they claim:
To them would Gaiffre yield his loyal vows,
Obey their mandates, their defence espouse:
Against the Gallic king his banners rise,
And with the Moorish ensigns meet the skies:
He waits impatient till the youths appear,
And follows Longin in his base career.

XI.

The royal Moors their discord lay aside,
And mix their troops, with Longin for their guide:
Soon with their foreign arms they hope to see
Domestic war unite its energy.
Marsilius, all impatient of delay,
Would urge the noble captive on her way,
And grace her offspring with the regal pride:
But Longin, wrathful, from the boon denied,
Lays ruthless plots to shake Laurentia's soul,
And hopes by haste her struggles to control.

XII.

Thus to Almanzor, who partakes his hate,
The wily exarch would his schemes relate:
"Let mean-souled Gaiffre cease to be a king!
"And o'er Pyrene's heights his vassals bring,
"Prompt homage to the new-crowned youths to yield;
"While, placed in triumph on the solemn shield,
"Through rich Austrasia's fields they wind their way,
"And-roads bestrewed with flowers receive their long array.
"Thus let Laurentia and her sons advance
"Crowned with sweet flatteries to their native France.

XIII.

"Laurentia, shrinking from the Moorish aid,
"Deems that the voice of God is thus obeyed;
"Yet loves her sons... the crown's resplendent prize
"By others offered still may charm her eyes.
"But why, why wait her suffrage to obtain?
"Close we our noble work, and render vain
"This proud refusal... let her children haste
"To reach their realm, and on their throne be placed.
"A hundred thousand Franks, with loud acclaim,
"On danger's brink her senses shall inflame.

XIV.

"Against her will our servile agent made,
"Shall Mainfroi's daughter our vast projects aid:
"Spite of her weakness and her vain alarms,
"Herself shall meet the shock of civil arms.
"Thus shall sage policy her fate control,
"Still drawing on the tame and peaceful soul
"Bound to its brazen ear... this royal dame,
"Who, urged by weak remorse and senseless shame,
"Refused e'en now Marsilius' guardian power,
"Herself shall help us with the dawning hour.

XV.

"The clouds of prejudice that blind her sight
"Intestine war forbid her to excite;
"But in that act which gives her sons the throne
"Will she adore the hand of Heaven alone:
"Such are the morals of a coward heart!
"But rich in means, prepared on every part,
"The wise bend all things to their secret aim...
"A certain conquest, monarch! shalt thou claim;
"And, though too feeble to promote our cause,
"The queen shall yield obedience to our laws."

XVI.

Thus Longin plotted with the Moorish king,
And these the hopes that from their counsel spring:
One stern ambition fired each faithless mind,
And impious rage their fatal force combined.
When twice ten thousand Moors had given to France
Her exiled kings, they threatened to advance,
By Longin led, to Ostia's destined coast,
And bear stout succour to the Lombard host:
To Cetia's port three hundred barks repair, (10)
And wait the signal for departure there.

XVII.

Now reached the Moor the summit of his pride,
But strove in friendly guise his joy to hide:
Slow towards his prey, but to secure it more,
He marched, and still a generous seeming bore:
But those, who, traitorous, in his crimes engage,
Shall soon become the victims of his rage,
Thus Longin to the Lombard host allies
His own, expectant by their fall to rise:
Thus, on Impiety's support, await
More dangerous ills than on her deadliest hate.

XVIII.

The heir of Clovis, in his vengeance blind,
To foreign perfidy submits his mind.
The valiant lords of Pamiers and Marsan
Beneath his ensign form the battle's van:
Montauban's foe, the faithless Aligan,
Young Richard's persecutor, there was found,
And many a chief of Aquitaine around:
The peers, whose fame Rieux and Morias boast, (11)
Tarbe, and Valence, with all their warlike host.

XIX.

At their duke's voice each chieftain and his powers,
Eager to battle issue from their towers:
On to the field the bright procession goes;
Her sparks of fire before them Discord throws,
While at their side the inconstant people runs,
Shout for Laurentia and her royal sons,
And blames its late desertion of their rights...
Their minds to maddening rage the duke excites;
Dishonour base on mighty Charles they fling,
And loud proclaim Austrasia's double king.

XX.

The royal mother and her sons to greet,
And offer faithless homage at their feet,
The duke in haste from Aquitania bends,
And, with his troops, Pyrene's height ascends.
The spreading woods of Ourasan they gain;
Their squadrons halt on Haran's lofty plain, (12)
And look at once o'er prostrate France and Spain.
There, underneath a hill's protecting banks,
Rugged and bare, encamped the ducal ranks:
When far o'er Oria's peak the ranging spies
Behold the banners of the crescent rise.

XXI.

Near to Massea Oria's walls extend,
Where towers and battlements the pass defend:
Within those walls Pelagius' race of yore
Stood firm so long against the opposing Moor;
Subdued by Arragon's brave chief, when now
Asturia's warriors to the pagan bow,
And lost Alphonso yields his mountain throne...
E'en here Marsilius' milder power is known,
And Christian thousands, who increase his reign,
Their own loved customs and their creed maintain.

XXII.

Almanzor's hand a dreadful sceptre wields
O'er the sad tenants of the neighbouring fields:
Envying the lot Marsilius' subjects share,
Far from those fertile fields, that softer air,
In exiled multitudes they fly to find
In these poor rocks security of mind:
Massea, Oria, an asylum give...
And if in secret prayers the fugitive
Still for Alphonso sighs, too grateful yet,
Too blest he feels, Marsilius to forget.

XXIII.

Now Gaiffre's bands to Oria's walls are led,
And lo! a desert town before them spread!
Yet every street, adorned and covered, shows
Green branches strewed, and flowers in fragrant rows.
All in these walls his presence seem to fly:
Chilled at the deep and dumb serenity,
Suspicious fear each soldier's heart alarms...
But now they reach the Moorish fort in arms,
Announce the chieftain who their host commands,
And march in splendour through the Paynim bands.

XXIV.

"Emir," the wondering duke began, "declare,
"Why round your camp these preparations fair?
"Why from their streets do Oria's dwellers roam?
"Leave they the bulwarks of their native home,
"At some far distant shrine their vows to pay?
"How long within this lonely fortress, say,
"Yourselves have fixed your military pride?
"Late on these towers few warriors were descried;
"To-morrow, doubtless, from this realm ye go,
"And join the host that circles old Bordeaux."

XXV.

The emir answers: "Sire, our army brings
"Back to their throne Austrasia's exiled kings:
"But yestermorn we gained this mountain ground,
"When all the Christian peasantry around,
"At Carloman's loved name, entwined display
"Wreaths, branches, flowers, o'er every village way...
"But Roland fell not far from yon ravine;
"And, from the dawn of day, the mournful queen
"Refuses rest, and takes her way of woe
"Within the funeral vale of Roncevaux.

XXVI.

"The shepherds, eager to partake her grief,
"And these last honours to the fallen chief,
"When now the mountain tops receive the sun,
"With generous ardour from their hamlets run
"In crowds around her path... and, though we fly
"All lawless rites of strange impurity,
"True to our holy faith, our princes give
"The subject Christian in repose to live;
"Yield the respect that Roland's virtues claim,
"And brand his faithless murderers with shame.

XXVII.

"At day's decline Laurentia we shall view:
"But, if resolved your journey to pursue,
"The valley's pass a shepherd shall disclose,
"While here your troops till your return repose."
These words the duke's anxiety assuage:
But now to satisfy his hate and rage,
On Roland's tomb he longs to fix his eyes...
'Tis famed indeed in Roncevaux he lies;
But oft before, with vain and faithless breath,
Has rumour borne abroad the hero's death.

XXVIII.

The knights of Tarbe and of Valence attend
The duke; and from the mountain they descend
Into that lone defile, far off descried,
Where late the paladins, defenceless, died.
They cross the torrent, and around them see,
On every side thrown down disorderly,
Gigantic oaks, and shattered, here and there,
Pines that lift up their ancient roots in air:
Still hangs the tottering crag, and seems to move
Upon each pointed precipice above...
And many a rock, hurled headlong in the pass,
Strews the sad valley with its shapeless mass.

XXIX.

Thus, in mid Alps, when Time, destroying all,
Commands the dreadful avalanche to fall,
Though pure the air, though peaceful be the skies,
Its ruins yet with horror strike our eyes...
Thus, in inexorable fury driven,
When earth calls down the chastisement of Heaven,
And pent volcanos burst... o'er all the plains
In iron waves the lava's flood remains;
Still pale and shuddering o'er its downcast wrath,
The traveller views its desolating path.

XXX.

As through the path the duke his guide pursues,
A lonely church amid the rocks he views;
The faithful here on days of rest repair,
Called by the consecrated hour of prayer.
Here from the mountain tops the swains descend:
The Virgin here, of human grief the friend,
Receives the worship of the simple train . . .
Her form is sculptured on their wooden fane,
And votive thanks, by numerous gifts exprest,
In these deep wilds the Mother's love attest.

XXXI.

A sad and sullen echo floats around;
The brazen signal spreads its mournful sound,
Speaking the funeral pomp . . . within the shrine
Black darkness grows, and day has ceased to shine.
Ensigns of death o'er all the pavement lie . . .
The *Host* ineffable is raised on high
For man's offence, and heavenly peace is prayed
For our brave chieftains, by the pastor's aid.
Full in the midst, before the sorrowing band,
Behold, a simple bier and coffin stand,
Recall to every thought the hero's doom,
And breathe o'er all the air a holy gloom.

XXXII.

The village priest observes the rites divine,
Revered so long in every Christian shrine.
Thrice round the coffin with religious care
See him the sacred wave and censer bear:
"Before thy God, within His bosom blest,
"Roland, enjoy thine everlasting rest!"
Thus his warm vows the pastor's accents pour,
And now the solemn sacrifice is o'er . . .
To that sepulchral glen the mourners go,
Where Roland lies the rustic cross below.

XXXIII.

When from these realms the satiated Moor
Withdrew his ranks, beside the chapel poor
The Christians of Navarre inhumed the dead . . .
Upon the rock, whose mass their bones o'erspread,
They reared the venerable cross . . . around,
Broken, and scattered o'er the dusty ground,
Beside the stream lay Roland's helm and shield,
And glorious sword, the wonder of the field:
Their glittering fragments, gathered by the swains,
Beneath the rock are placed with his remains.

XXXIV.

By that sad stone Laurentia kneels, and there
The village sages gird the royal fair:
Full on the crags above she rests her eyes,
And asks in tears the justice of the skies.
The priest prepares to celebrate the dead . . .
The duke in silence, at this instant dread,
Approaches close . . . with hesitating pause
He, and the vile supporters of his cause,
Arrest their steps . . . but thus, unwillingly,
His eye of guilt the funeral pomp must see,
His ear receive the hero's eulogy.

XXXV.

Beside the mournful scene behold him kneel,
And offer Heaven a hypocritic zeal:
The afflicted crowd and all their tearful grief
Yield his deep hatred an accursed relief:
A dreadful pleasure even can he find
In this sad moment for his guilty mind . . .
Here, here! expired his foe . . . but conscience brings
To chase that transport all her vengeful stings.

XXXVI.

When thus the priest . . . "How frail is human bliss!
"How brief the honours of a world like this!
"Roland, the terror of the embattled plain,
"Against whose sword war's ramparts rose in vain;
"Roland, the pride of arms, the knightly flower,
"Whose countless labours, whose unequalled power,
"With fabulous renown have filled the earth,
"Falls in his prime! . . where now his valorous worth,
"His conquering strength? the fame to Roland given,
"What is its weight before the King of Heaven?

XXXVII.

"Light as the scattered blossom of the heath,
"That summer chases with her evening breath,
"The phrenzied passions, and the power of man,
"And crested pride, that triumphs for a span,
"Before eternal Justice disappear!
"Let transitory glory's bright career
"Our dazzled eyes and daring hearts mislead . . .
"In the great balance it is dust indeed!
"Virtue alone in Heaven receives the crown,
"Denied to empty and unjust renown.

XXXVIII.

"For Roland's aid the trembling widow flew;
"The helpless orphan his protection knew;
"Prayers from the weak for Roland were preferred . . .
"The weak, whose voice on earth is faintly heard,
"But whose complaining tongue is borne on high,
"And pleases Him who reigns eternally.
"Roland still triumphed o'er our impious foe;
"And, if his sins a cloud around him throw,
"The hero's faith, his numerous virtues rise,
"To plead for grace and mercy from the skies."

XXXIX.

Touched by these words, the traitor's bosom bleeds:
Long silence to the holy speech succeeds . . .
The rising crowds around Laurentia press,
Still marked her listening children to address
By Roland's tomb . . . in trembling thought she sees
Austrasia filled with impious enemies;
Filled in her name with bloodshed and alarms . . .
Not yet the diadem has lost its charms;
But Greeks and Moors, allied in her defence,
Wake in her virtuous heart a painful sense.

XL.

How, when departing from this vale of rest,
Shall grandeur's poison agitate her breast?
How shall the duke, whom Longin's plots control,
In civil discords plunge her gentle soul?
Of crimes, of combats, and a lengthening course
Of ruthless passions the perpetual source,
Fell thirst of power, ambition's fatal flame,
Shall urge the parent in her children's name:
That dire seduction shall Laurentia prove,
Veiled in the features of maternal love.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XIV.

FROM THE SIXTY-EIGHTH TO THE SEVENTIETH DAY.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

The bridge of Strasbourg. Combat of the Paladin Isolier and the Scandinavian Edgar. The Frank captives delivered. The rock of Roland.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XIV.

I.

NOW, 'mid the wreck of Strasbourg's smoking towers, (1)
The Archdruid's voice convokes Germania's powers;
Unnumbered swarms within the walls are poured,
And ceaseless swell the North's triumphant horde.
Irmensul's priests receive the warlike band,
And guide their march to that devoted land
Where royal Witikind's dread banner floats. . .
There the proud Rhine, o'erspread by feeble boats,
To Neustria joined the Saxon plain, and gave
By that fell bond fresh carnage to her wave.

II.

Ormez, fit instrument of Hell, inspires
In all their hearts his own relentless fires:
"Sons of the North! pile up your victims high!
"Beneath your swords let all the Christians die!
"Let strength, let weakness, feel your equal rage,
"And fall alike on infancy and age.
"To serve Irmensul, to avenge your name,
"Employ by turns the faulchion and the flame.
"Favoured by heaven if now your standards rise,
"The Suevian slaughter has appeased the skies."

III.

See, to Irmensul's knees the bands are led:
The Archdruid there, by attestations dread,
Devotes at once their courage and their crimes. . .
The towers of Strasbourg, from far distant times,
By Clovis reared, a Gothic church contain'd;(2)
But now the sons of Lucifer profaned
Its venerable courts, and o'er the shrine
Irmensul's form usurped the seat divine;
There the dark homage of the North was given,
And scandalized the walls so dear to Heaven.

IV.

When through the mountain's depth the waters stray,
And beds of sulphur intercept their way,
Transformed at once to liquid fire they go,
Caught from the burning soil o'er which they flow. . :
Their passage opening to the vale below,
Each adverse bank betrays their ardent power
In many a drooping plant and withering flower. . .
Thus in the druid's camp the Germans find
New sparks of fury to inflame their mind;
Glow, as they gather, with increasing fire,
And nourish slaughter's unrestrained desire.

V.

On the raised bosom of the restless seas,
Wave mounts o'er wave, before the northern breeze;
So in the Saxon camp new armies form,
Roll ceaseless on, and aggravate the storm:
The walls of Salme and of Blamont they fill, (3)
And fair Lorraine receives them onward still:
Her fertile plains their roving squadrons waste. . .
Charles marked their standard, and in eager haste
Round woods and mountains wound his martial way,
To where Argentum's distant turrets lay.

VI.

There, by his first assault, the king would show
His unexpected presence to the foe:
At fall of night his deeply silent ranks,
Of azure Blinde abandoning the banks,(4)
Direct their march to those once happy plains,
Where Strasbourg spread her desolate remains...
A blaze of bursting fire amid the shade
The fallen city's dim extent betrayed;
And Clovis' shrine, that rose sublimely proud,
Seemed afar off to rest within a cloud.

VII.

The raging flame had spared that shrine alone,
Turrets and battlements were all o'erthrown;
And giant fragments of the walls were strewed
Through the choked fosses in disorder rude:
Amid the stony chaos, scattered round,
The Saxons lay, in careless slumber bound:
Conquest appears ... and in our soldiers' reach...
The king commands, they rush into the breach:
Brave sons of France! they spring at once to arms,
And fill the barbarous host with wild alarms.

VIII.

Our swift battalions on the ramparts leap,
And through the ruined towers with fury sweep:
The horsemen, ranging o'er the plains below,
With lifted axe await the coming foe.
Irmensul's host to meet the battle try,
But know not yet their midnight enemy,
Amazed, confused . . . when suddenly around
The name of mighty Charles, with awful sound,
Fills all the air! o'erwhelmed with deepest dread,
They fly for life, and through the country spread.

IX.

On every side they find their ardent foes,
And fall subdued beneath their ruthless blows:
Rapid around the walls the fierce Clothaire
Bathed his red lance in blood, nor knew to spare:
An equal crowd by Isambard were slain ...
This chief, when royal Pepin on the Maine
Routed the Suevian host, in youthful pride
First drew the sword, and sought the field untried;
His earliest deeds the hero's worth evince,
Crowned with the standard of the hostile prince.

X.

Late has he sworn in tented field to claim
Revenge for Eresbourg's foul scene of shame:
Long had the hero's heart been doomed to prove
For awful Adelinde a loyal love... (5)
Ne'er did his tongue the secret wound betray,
But silent suffering ate his heart away:
Deep in that heart for ever must remain
The hopeless passion, and the cureless pain:
One ray of joy this hour the chief has seen,
Revenging Heral's death he serves his queen.

XI.

The Saxons, flying from the impetuous Franks,
Disordered sought the Rhine's protecting banks:
There to the floating bridge in crowds they prest,
And 'mid their country's bosom hoped for rest:
But on the river's brink their conqueror stood,
Bursting that feeble barrier of the flood:
From its first bonds already disengaged,
Free on the shore the rolling torrent raged:
The loosened boats, with unresisted force
Borne down the stream, pursue their rapid course.

XII.

The brave Isolier heads the conquering train,
And shows the Saxon that retreat is vain:
High o'er his fiery steed, in martial pride,
Prepared to brave the tumult of the tide,
Full on the centre of the bridge he stands,
And points the strength of his unwearied bands...
His dreadful shouts from shore to shore resound,
And wake the river echoes wide around:
The foe, arrested in his sudden flight,
O'er the fierce waters throws his mournful sight,
And lifts a cry of anguish and despite.

XIII.

"Pagans!" Isolier cried, "your power is o'er;
"Ye see the land that gave you birth no more!
"Flight cannot snatch you from the threatening tomb...
"Lost is your hope... determined is your doom."
Thus as he speaks, he plunges in the wave;
Athwart the billowy stream the courser brave
Bears up his lord, and struggles to the bank;
Close on the barbarous host, the dauntless Frank
Ascends the shore, and, scattering o'er the land,
Drives to the hollow vales the astonished band.

XIV.

One warrior only for the combat stays,
Proclaimed the "Valiant" by his country's praise;
The Danish Edgar, Pepin's foe of old,
'Mid Odin's cruel worshippers enrolled:
Athirst for plunder, his barbarian horde
Through wasted Germany in torrents poured,
Passing the barrier of their northern main...
For thrice ten years of ceaseless conquest vain,
His scornful eyes the youthful peer survey,
And mark, exulting, for an easy prey.

XV.

The glittering armour the Cirnesian wore
Allures the foe; from great Martel of yore
This had the prince received... high valour's prize...
A lion there, whose roughened bristles rise,
On the vast buckler's brazen round impreſt,
Glared terrible... bright gold adorned the crest:
The sword, whose handle to a hammer bent,
With silver mixed pure ivory's ornament;
The well known sign recalls to memory's eye
The vanquished crescent's deadliest enemy.

XVI.

"Gigantic warrior!" the Cirnesian cried,
"These ravished arms shall not increase thy pride:
"Plunder has lured you from the North, but here
"Martel's good sword arrests your rude career."
Speaking, he strikes the foe's enormous frame;
The shattered breast-plate flies in sparks of flame,
Beneath his echoing blows... with fruitless force
The warlike Dane resists his conquering course:
Thus Roland's arm, thus Charles in anger strikes,
And lightning flashes from their murderous pikes.

XVII.

The Pagan flies... his courser in the tide
Plunges alarmed... Isolier at his side
Pursues the assault... the raging waters roar,
And the steed rests upon the sand no more.
The wearied Dane beholds the impending foe,
And on his casque receives the powerful blow:
He sinks in dying languor to his grave,
And slowly disappears beneath the wave...
"Such be the fate of all!" Isolier cried,
"Whose impious footsteps pass this guardian tide."

XVIII.

He spoke; and on the plain his fury poured,
Where none durst meet his homicidal sword:
So fierce, so swift, the well-armed hunter roves,
Chasing the savage tenants of the groves.
Isolier's host are distanced in his path;
And now, led on by his impetuous wrath,
Almost alone he nears the rising hill,
Where Strasbourg's fugitives the caverns fill;
Rallying his numerous squadrons for the fight,
The Druid's bloody banner waves in sight.

XIX.

The chief looks back upon the plain afar,
And views his lingering comrades of the war:
His dauntless courage, and his fury high,
Scarce yield at length to hard necessity;
And, stung with shame to leave one barbarous foe,
He meets his followers with reluctance slow,
Chiding, incensed, their ruinous delay...
Meanwhile the Druid on their forest way
Guides his pale host, escapes the threatened shock,
And climbs the brow of yon aerial rock.

XX.

Back to the camp Isolier leads his train;
Charles and his peers, within that sacred fane,
Scarce from Irmensul's horrid worship free,
Thanked Him who holds the battle's destiny...
Twice fifty captives, a devoted band,
Snatched from the conquering Saxon's murderous hand,
Together prayed to that protecting God
Whose arm has scattered the perverse abroad:
The hero, joining in their holy zeal,
And blest an equal gratitude to feel,
Viewed them, relieved from hostile thraldom's weight,
Nor ever owned victorious joy so great.

XXI.

Amid the rescued throng the monarch's eye
Saw many a chief, whom stern captivity
In dungeons deep had forced to pine away,
Lost since the Weser's sanguinary day.
Their mournful look recalls a thought of gloom;
Yet has the king to learn young Ulric's doom,
And valiant Berenger's... "Who knows," he cries,
"Of all this host, their hapless destinies?
"Drag they the fetters which depress the brave,
"Or rest they both in an untimely grave?"

XXII.

"Life yet is theirs," a captive's voice replied,
"The Arch-druid's hatred Witikind defied,
"And snatched young Ulric from his threatened fate;
"Thus, if compassion touched his breast too late
"To save the father from that vengeful doom,
"The child, at least, was rescued from the tomb;
"And, guarded now, within the royal tent,
"By pity's kind and manly sentiment,
"Like a king's son the hapless orphan shows,
"Nor fears the blood-stained hatchet of his foes.

XXIII.

"Less happy Berenger, in Saxon chains,
"Of angry fortune feels the heaviest pains:
"But late with us confined in Strasbourg's towers,
"Fell Ormez, at the dawn's approaching hours,
"Dragged, in his rapid flight, the chief away:
"Ne'er did his soul invincible betray
"That captive chief... but, with an air serene
"He met the murderers... with a dauntless mien
"Bade us bear up against our tyrants still,
"And by his pattern lightened every ill."

XXIV.

The thoughtful monarch on Isolier's eye
Fixes his own, that shines impatiently:
"That generous chieftain had ye all obeyed,
"The Druids," cried he, "had my prey been made!
"The sword Martel his warlike father gave,
"Hereditary treasure of the brave,
"Weighs not too heavy in his valiant hands...
"Leader, this day, of my victorious bands,
"Renowned associate of the peers of France,
"In glory's field I see thy foot advance!

XXV.

"Thy matchless worth to cherish and to grace,
"Thy monarch knows... henceforth, in every place
"The friend of Carloman shall follow me...
"Him, ranking mid our noblest chivalry,
"The nation's homage in my court attends."
The brave Cirnesian to the monarch bends...
His glorious actions thus at length extort,
In peril's hour, the plaudits of the court:
In that dread hour 'tis real merit weighs,
And all the favour of intrigue decays.

XXVI.

Thus, valiant warrior, in the dangerous fight
A hundred rivals fade before thy sight:
Slander, awhile confused with base alarms,
Grows pale, and shudders at thy glittering arms...
Then all those nameless chiefs, unknown to worth,
Return into the dust that gave them birth,
The spawn of vicious peace... the war's disgrace...
Then, Zurick's day exulting to retrace,
At length thy country calls thee back to fame,
And Victory's Child is once again thy name.

XXVII.

The regal banner, spread without delay,
Pursues the Saxon on his mountain way:
"Conqueror of Edgar!" said the king, "advance!
"Before my footsteps guide the peers of France:
"Urge your swift coursers in the Druid's trace...
"Doubtless, the woods that Strasbourg's plain embrace,
"Conceal the furious monsters in their breast...
"With silent march the midnight hills invest,
"And seize the Saxon's dark abode of rest.

XXVIII.

"My friends, the fervour of your zeal allay,
"And rescue Berenger this happy day:
"Let powerless threats, and cries, and tumult cease,
"Nor thus the danger of the chief increase:
"The captive's safety in your prudence lies,
"Defenceless 'mid his murderous enemies;
"Check, for his sake, indignant valour's fire,
"And fear the Druid's unexhausted ire:
"Burst be his chains ere ye revenge his fate,
"And outstrip Ormez in his bloody hate.

XXIX.

"Shall Ulric too from impious bonds be free?
"The king has spared his helpless infancy...
"Alas! how long will his protecting power
"Save the poor orphan from the fatal hour?
"Irmensul's knife close pointed at his breast,
"How shall the threatened slaughter be repress?
"Dear latest offspring of a cherished race!...
"No more may Witikind his fame disgrace;
"But yet, to soft humanity inclined,
"Dethrone the demon in his royal mind.

XXX.

"In Strasbourg's walls his host no refuge gains,
"Free is the Rhine from her insulting chains;
"Pity's last claim is silenced in my heart,
"And stern revenge is now my only part:
"Death shall devour the crowds, who dared advance
"To these polluted boundaries of France:
"Here shall their band its wretched fate fulfil;
"Thus shall I execute the Almighty will...
"No more, my friends! this barbarous nation spare,
"Baptism, or death, Irmensul's soldiers share."

XXXI.

"Baptism or Death!" At this tremendous sound
Brandish the Franks their glittering swords around;
And now Argentum's scattered dwellers come,
Quitting the woods, their miserable home,
To bend before their king: distrest, afraid,
Long from their native walls the troop had staid:
Infants and females, clothed in rags, are there,
The pale, the lost assembly of despair...
The soldiers are no more; their ruthless doom
Denies the very honour of a tomb.

XXXII.

Buried beneath the broken walls they lie,
Where countless orphans, with a plaintive cry,
Wander about the city of their birth...
They run distracted to each fallen hearth,
With doubtful eyes the unhappy ruin see,
And scarce discern, in fond anxiety,
Their native soil: through waves of drifted dust
Others behold, in timorous distrust,
Or fancy they behold, their much loved home,
And, calling on their sire, in tears around it roam.

XXXIII.

The pitying monarch their distress surveyed,
And lent his hapless sons a lavish aid:
Fulrad is trusted with the pious care,
To soften in these realms the wrongs of war...
How many tears, good Fulrad, wilt thou dry!
Relieve how oft the pang of misery!
Orphans and widows, infancy and age,
Thy ready help shall every where engage;
Despair itself shall feel its power decay,
By thy celestial accents charmed away.

XXXIV.

Far from these walls, where new exploits are planned,
Isolier guided his intrepid band:
But o'er the Druid's mind unholy light
Irmensul shed; and in the depth of night,
Across the woods he bends his desert way,
Without repose... but, when the beam of day
Faint on the earth in early radiance falls,
He gains Saverne's venerable walls:
Roused at his voice, the Saxon camp afar
Again re-echoes to the shout of war.

XXXV.

The king collects the leaders of his force
Within his tent... he doubts the conquering course
Of Pepin's son, nor thinks his martial ranks
Scour, near his own, the Rhine's protected banks.
The horde, meanwhile, on Strasbourg bend their wrath,
Nor lose one moment in their rapid path;
Fierce children of the North, in swarms they go,
And Neustria's wasted bosom overflow.
No passage open for fresh aid remains,
Retreat is hopeless to Germania's plains;
If now, abandoning the river's side,
The Saxon wanders from the sheltering tide.

XXXVI.

The haughty Albion fills the honoured post,
Fixed by his king, to lead the murderous host:
Clad in light armour for their swift career,
A hundred knights attend the valiant peer:
Great is the hero in the lists of war,
On Thames' green banks renowned and feared afar;
Though deeds of ruthless rage his glory shame,
Yet of that ravaged land the borrowed name
Records his blood-stained theatre of fame.

XXXVII.

When royal Pepin closed his dying eye,
Albion assailed his offspring's infancy:
At his command the gathered Pagans dare
To shake the frontier of the Meuse with war;
But Charles, at Dizier's walls, o'ercame his powers, (6)
And bore him prisoner to Lutetia's towers.
There to his plighted faith, the traitor's sport,
A peace was granted at the conqueror's court:
Like the false ruler of the Huns he swears
A treacherous oath, and for the field prepares.

XXXVIII.

Not long in mild captivity confined,
Nothing could soothe the rancour of his mind:
With fruitless kindness on so fierce a foe
Deigning each grace of knighthood to bestow,
The generous king benignly strove to gain
This tiger's heart to peace, but strove in vain;
Nor did his cherished queen herself disdain
To gird the sword the savage chief around,
And with a brilliant casque his head she crowned:
Martel of old the glittering helm possest,
Five stars of gold adorned the feathered crest.

XXXIX.

Impatient ever for the martial field,
Dangers alone delight to Albion yield:
His troops, inured to follow and obey,
Through Soër's darkling wood pursue his way; (7)
The winding turns of Iller's glen they gain,
And now, in noonday splendour o'er the plain
Looks the full sun, when Albion's host of spears
On the flat valleys of Velant appears:
Valleys, that circling hills sublimely crown,
From Roland's rock receiving their renown.

XL.

This rock afar attracts the traveller's eyes,
Alone amidst a vast extent it lies;
Like some strong rampart formed on every side,
Into the air it swells in towery pride:
The work of art the polished walls appear;
'Tis said, that hapless Roland fancied here,
In his wild thought, a rival chief to find;
At once he yielded to his fury blind,
While the smooth surface of the rock displayed
The matchless force of Durindana's blade.

XLI.

Roland's high deeds and melancholy rage
The credulous and vulgar ear engage:
Thus baseless rumour leads the crowd astray,
And bids our hero's rightful fame decay:
Italia's fabling bard prolongs the strain,
And makes our old romances young again, (8)
Dazzling the world with various dreams and vain.
But with severer tone shall truth record,
Defender of the cross, thy powerful sword!
Recall Velant's illustrious day, and raise
On victory's genuine field the song of praise.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XV.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

The last combat of Witikind.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XV.

I.

BENEATH the hero's rock awhile delayed,
His rapid course the haughty Albion stayed:
The seeming towers a noon-day shelter yield,
And fling their giant shadows o'er the field.
The southern mountains, that the valley bound,
Send forth a sudden and uncertain sound:
Irmensul's host that distant sound alarms...
The brave Cirnesian rushes there to arms;
In growing loudness o'er the plain is spread
The long-exulting neigh, the many-trampling tread.

II.

Thus, charged with thunder, through the troubled sky,
Two blackening clouds against each other fly;
While Boreas, struggling with the southern breeze,
Uplifts the indignant bosom of the seas:
Bursting at once, with rage beyond control,
The clouds, the waves, in like confusion roll,
And one dread impulse shakes both sea and air...
O'er the dark scene fast-flashing lightnings glare,
And the bright bolt upon the dazzled ground
Descends, while thundering echoes crash around.

III.

Thus our fierce warriors and the northern train
Tumultuous rush, and mingle on the plain:
Victory awhile her doubtful favour parts,
And wide around her fly the fatal darts.
Raging in ardent anger through the war,
The impetuous Albion on the brave Clothaire
With powerful arm his iron lance has thrown...
Less sure before had Romuald's javelin flown:
The spear of Albion to the mark has prest,
And deeply settled in the soldier's breast.

IV.

Blood from that falling soldier largely poured...
Zeno encounters next the Saxon sword;
Like the ripe corn, when harvest hours are come,
Rialto's exile plunges in the tomb.
Pisan in vain his falling friend would stay...
Scarce, in the vigour of his youthful day,
Could he have braved the assault of such a foe:
Sinking, o'erwhelmed beneath the powerful blow,
Fearless in death the generous hero bleeds,
Rolled in the dust beneath the Saxon steeds.

V.

Proud of success, the chieftain's daring grows,
And gains fresh spirits from the blood that flows:
The wide air echoes with his thundering cries,
And France, and all her warriors, he defies.
As these insulting accents strike his ears
In lengthening sounds, brave Isambard appears (1)
With lifted axe, with fury-kindled eye,
And marks the crest on Albion's helmet high:
For him alone resolved his force to save;
"Come, felon!" cries he, "felon! to thy grave!

VI.

" From thy vile brows I'll rend that honoured crest,
" And plunge that sacred weapon in thy breast:
" Forget'st thou then the hand august that gave
" Such gifts, such envied trophies of the brave?
" Thy lips accursed have dared their faith betray,
" Sworn to our queen: perfidious traitor, say,
" What charms were wanting to subdue thy soul?
" Nor earth, *nor Heaven*, thy malice can control . . .
" If then a *hellish* flame thy bosom *light*,
" Go! seek the kingdom of eternal night!"

VII.

" Why these injurious words?" the chief exclaimed,
" Think'st thou this heart by coward fear is shamed?
" Tempting, like me, the battle's mimic sport,
" The brilliant tourneys of Lutetia's court,
" Could'st thou not too such glorious gifts have sought?
" But *these* are mine, and dearly *will* be bought."
He spoke; and urged his courser on the foe,
Fierce as some threatning crag of mountain snow . . .
The wary Frank wheels by as he attacks,
And in his helmet drives the piercing axe.

VIII.

Loud rings the casque the dreadful blow beneath . . .
The tempered gold has saved the chief from death;
But vain were all his art and strength to fly
The steady hold of that young enemy:
Deep in the crest the buried steel he held
With stout right hand; and with the left repelled
The Pagan's massy club; that, plied in vain,
With wasted vigour rose and fell again:
Stretched out between the steeds, where'er they
wheel,
Pursues the moving helm the implanted steel.

IX.

Thus on some angry bull is seen to spring
The intrepid lancer in the Spanish ring; (2)
Plunge in his ample brow the quivering spear,
And front the monster in his full career:
Then at his side he bends with wary skill,
And still pursues his path, and wounds him still;
Triumphant vaulting on his steed he goes
Along the astonished crowd's rejoicing rows;
When, with his poniard armed, the matadore
Starts forth, and strikes but once, and all is o'er.

X.

Albion beholds his wavering soldiers reel:
Wasting his blows upon the senseless steel,
He gathers all his breath, and all his strength,
And with one struggle lifts his head at length:
His haughty neck is from the helmet freed;
Following his routed friends, the furious steed
Flies o'er the plain . . . the conqueror in his pride,
Suspended from his axe the casque descried;
Seized by the royal plume the glorious gold,
And bade his circling friends the prize behold.

XI.

He seeks for Albion in the hostile band . . .
A group of fugitives his course withstand:
There strives the chief their courage to excite,
And round his standard rally for the fight
With echoing shouts . . . young Perigord surveys
His naked head; with keen unerring gaze,
And steady arm, he hurls the whizzing spear:
The wary German, from its swift career
Bending aside, presents his heavy shield . . .
The javelin rings upon the brazen field.

XII.

The thirst of vengeance fires his angry air;
When piercing cries, and clouds of dust, declare
The Saxons near the rock: the chief afar
Descries his monarch in the advancing war;
To join his kindred troops in haste he bends,
And round the astonished Paladins extends
Their multitude immense... but, free from fear,
Our chiefs behold the numbers that appear;
Nor count those numbers with discretion's eye,
Like Christians fixed to conquer or to die.

XIII.

Incapable of flight at this dread hour,
They march to meet the hostile army's power...
But Charles observed afar with anxious eye
Their glorious toils and doubtful destiny:
The daily progress of the foe he knew,
And watched his cherished sons with guardian view.
Omfroi approaches in the monarch's name,
An active messenger, a chief of fame,
His voice is wont supreme respect to claim.

XIV.

"One moment, comrades, yield to flight," he said,
"And be the will of royal Charles obeyed:
"Turn to yon sloping hills without delay,
"And let the rapid foe pursue your way
"To where the king has fixed the combat's place;
"Following our steps, destruction and disgrace
"Shall whelm his host, while we receive the prize
"Of all our toils, and hard-won victories:
"The grave is open for Irmensul's train;
"Charles holds the forest that surrounds the plain."

XV.

"Omfroi," Isolier said, "my docile soul,
"Checked by thy voice, its fury shall control;
"Let soldiers fight, but let their king command..."
He spoke, and at the word his faithful band
Swift o'er the field their leader's horse pursued;
But just before the barbarous multitude
They urge their flight.. great Witikind is there,
And Rodmir, succoured by the warlike fair,
Chasing with eager shout the flying Franks,
Wide o'er the plain impels his countless ranks.

XVI.

The Lombard's daughter, clad in sable arms,
Hid from all eyes her sex and matchless charms:
A brazen javelin prest her feeble hand;
A dagger sparkled in her vestment's band;
The spotless lily grac'd her pictur'd shield,
Swept by the sickle from its parent field;
Below, this mournful motto meets the eye,
'TO FIGHT WITHOUT REPOSE, TO WIN REVENGE OR DIE!'
Now more than once had Rodmir wondering seen
The bleeding Franks beneath the warlike queen.

XVII.

The hate that fires her heightens every hour,
And seems to lend her soul a new-born power:
The Druid's self her ardent zeal admires,
And with Irmensul's promised aid inspires.
High from her first success her hopes advance...
While fancy paints the falling realm of France,
She trusts at length beneath the Saxon sword
Will bow the banner of her faithless lord;
And proud Lutetia's conquered towers display
The floating ensigns of a foreign sway.

XVIII.

Full in the centre of the Paynim train
She takes her march; when now upon the plain,
Where to the hill the advancing squadrons bend,
The numerous infantry at once descend:
Forth from the woods, with cool and steady pace,
By Sigefroi led, a brave Helvetic race,
Vigorous their frame, and docile is their mind;
In close battalions like a wall combined,
They stand in front, immoveable they stand,
And check the progress of that barbarous band.

XIX

Thierri of Aquitaine, and Frioul's lord,
And Theuderic, who erst with conquering sword
O'ercame Provence, assist Helvetia's peer:
At Pepin's court each noble cavalier
Had learnt in silence to subdue his foe...
To rule the fervour of the brave they know
With prudent skill; and, discipline their guide,
In honour's field their warlike worth is tried:
Spite of the weight of years, their manly force
Could yet confound young valour in its course.

XX.

Scarce had they fixed their formidable ranks,
When, in their front, Isolier halts the Franks;
At his command the knights their coursers wheel,
Offering the foe a wide-spread wall of steel...
When ocean's waves burst furious on the shore,
The sands and tumbled stones with crashing roar
Yield to their rage; but each deep-rooted rock
Stands motionless, and braves the watery shock.

XXI.

So firm the knights, and that Helvetic band,
Against the Saxon's barbarous fury stand.
What chiefs, what soldiers, snatched from life away,
Fell by the Pagan sword this fatal day!
Wielding a weighty club, in threatening strain,
The warlike king provokes the valiant Dane:
"Is Ogier then so shaken with affright,
"Headlong to seek an ignominious flight?
"Not without cause he flies my vengeful wrath,
"Base offspring of the North, avoid my path!"

XXII.

Thus as he spoke, he whirled upon the foe
From his long club the inevitable blow...
Vain was resistance; o'er the hero's eyes
The transitory mists of death arise:
Raging with pain, he scarce resumes his force,
Ere fixed again erect upon his horse,
Like Lybia's serpent breathing angry fire,
He bids his well-hurled lance fulfil his ire,
And to the heart of Witikind aspire.

XXIII.

The strong lance strikes upon the German shield;
Worn by the royal Saxon in the field,
Hereditary gift, that buckler showed
The bloody image of his northern God:
Loud on the solid brass the javelin rings...
As swiftly, strongly, to the mark it springs,
The image of the battle-fiend it tears,
But spends its fury, and the monarch spares:
At once a thousand warriors swell the fray,
And part the chiefs on this momentous day.

XXIV.

The indignant rivals whom the crowd divide
Vent on that hostile crowd their raging pride;
Swords, helmets, fly in countless sparkles round,
And streams of blood discolour all the ground,
Shed by the infuriate Saxon, or the Dane,
Ruthless alike amid the slaughtered train.
From rank to rank the impetuous monarch runs,
And reaps a harvest of Helvetia's sons:
The leader's standard has he won in fight...
That leader, sickening at the shameful sight,
Falls in the centre of his glorious band,
In age himself, beneath an aged hand.

XXV.

Raising the banner of the chief on high,
The king has seized this pledge of victory.
Eager to equal, to surpass his fame,
Rodmir on Archambaud directs his aim;
But he, well tried in strength and warlike skill,
Baffled that aim with agile movement still;
When, clad in mail, the dreadful chief beside,
Armelia's self he fancied he descried...
Close to her guardian rode the Lombard fair,
In every field inseparably there.

XXVI.

Her slender figure seems to speak the queen...
The faithful soldier, when that form was seen,
Felt from his heart his master's empress claim
A mingled impulse of respect and shame.
Watchful, and seeking to detect her charms,
The Frank unconscious stood, and dropped his arms;
Armelia marked the moment of his rest...
Her docile palfrey to the knight she pressed,
And plunged a biting javelin in his breast.

XXVII.

The ruthless queen the chieftain's fall descried,
And o'er her noble conquest glowed with pride.
"To me the merit of his death be given,"
She shouts, "and if my vows are heard by Heaven,
"No peer of France Lutetia's walls regains...
"The royal blood that fills Armelia's veins
"Let Charles agnize in this victorious blow!"
She speaks, and bares her forehead to the foe;
And, eager to attract the monarch's eyes,
Here, sword in hand, his utmost wrath defies.

XXVIII.

Fearing her vengeance, by some jealous chance,
May with this triumph be concealed from France,
And she who slew the warrior be unknown,
She draws her javelin from that knight o'erthrown;
When o'er the plain, at once, with fury bend
Visige and Childebert, to aid their friend,
And valiant Egbert... Rodmir darts to meet
Their coming rage, and checks their coursers fleet:
He guards the queen beneath his ample shield,
And braves his three opponents in the field.

XXIX.

With naked head, and eye of angry light,
Albion pursues his conqueror through the fight:
In threatening rage his accents fill the sky...
So roars the lion for his progeny,
Or ravished mate, whom some fierce hunter slays:
But now, far off, amid the combat, strays
The glorious Isambard, and Geilon there,
Visige, and Witikind, the battle share;
The Montmorencis, whom no chiefs efface,
And Richard, worthy son of Aymon's race,
And Cirnos' gallant peer, contend to gain
High valour's prize, and earth with blood distain.

XXX.

Godfrey, meanwhile, beneath the mountains wound,
That to the north Velant's wide lowland bound;
Sole partner of the monarch's plans he goes,
Ripening the ruin of his heedless foes:
With bows and arrows armed, his numerous throng
In silence, 'mid the forests, march along,
Safe from all eyes; and follow through the night
A watchful guide, who leads their steps aright.
The monarch waits, impatient to descry
At Roland's rock their friendly banners fly.

XXXI.

Godfrey must give the signal for the fight:
On field of gold his banner spreads to sight
A conquering cross, a sceptre, and a tomb:
These, intermixed, the warrior's arms illume,
Revered insignia of the Bouillon race:
Their ancient deeds the glorious bearings trace; (3)
Or, in such signs, high Heaven's presaging voice
Announced the future hero of its choice,
Who chief defender of the Cross should stand,
And break the bonds of Sion's mourning land.

XXXII.

Long winding round the hills, the chief descries
Full on the plain the varying banners rise;
Accomplishing at once his king's designs,
Across the field he bends his rapid lines,
And halts at Roland's rock his gathered force:
When now, advancing with impetuous course,
Charles, like the fiery thunderbolt, is nigh...
The brazen trumpets to his voice reply;
And down each mountain pass, as he commands,
Rush eager out his simultaneous bands.

XXXIII.

The plains, the mountains, flash with fire around,
With thundering hoofs the coursers shake the ground;
Piercing the dusty whirlwind to the van,
Charles heads the peers . . . his one pervading plan
Arranges all . . . harmonious march the Franks,
And wide embrace the foe's triumphant ranks . . .
Their king, astonished, trembles for defeat,
Feels in his mind confused emotions meet,
And, ere he fights, is hastening to retreat.

XXXIV.

At once he hides the trouble of his heart,
And strives the hope of conquest to impart;
His warlike chiefs he counsels and inspires,
And fills their souls with homicidal fires.
Rodmir and Albion, rivals in the fight,
Ranged by his voice, command the left and right:
Late, with high daring, had they charged the Franks . . .
But, when they see the leader of their ranks,
That far-famed terror of the Paynim cause,
Each from the shock his wavering host withdraws.

XXXV.

On every side the Paladins advance:
With powerful arm the monarch hurls his lance;
Around his horse a mighty circle grows,
Of shattered weapons, and expiring foes:
He seems above the force of man to rise,
And tower gigantic in his soldiers' eyes . . .
He fights with Pagans; Heaven defends her son;
Irmensul shudders, and the field is won.

XXXVI.

Repelling, step by step, the German lines,
To Godfrey's darts the King his prey resigns;
The Saxon, now the dread design was plain,
Saw at one glance the contest was in vain:
Swift as an arrow through his marshalled power
He rides, and, "Wait till fortune's kinder hour,
"My friends!" he cries; "avoid the rock... 'tis there
"We fall... pursue my path, and fly the snare."

XXXVII.

He spoke... and to the right his warriors led,
Where shadowy Iller's winding forest spread.
Turning at times upon his rapid way,
Albion with showers of darts renews the fray:
Rodmir, alarmed for loved Armelia's life,
Holds his broad buckler through the deadly strife
Still o'er her head: the queen... dark thought of woe!
May mourn a helpless captive with the foe...
Now first he feels the unknown sense of fear,
And joins, enraged, the fugitives' career.

XXXVIII.

Frioul's brave chieftain madly dares oppose
A powerless barrier to the flying foes:
The Saxon king, with steel all bloody now,
Strikes the death-stroke upon that chieftain's brow...
Those cherished walls he ne'er again shall see,
Where erst he gained the prize of bravery,
The ducal crown from Pepin's royal hand...
Where Aquileia's distant turrets stand, (4)
His wife and sons in vain to meet him burn,
And form sweet pictures of his wished return:
Far, far away, by Iller's wooded side
Closed is his course of military pride..

XXXIX.

Theuderic and Thierri would avenge his fate . . .
Together had they kept their rural state;
At once the fatal hour of both arrives,
The German's massy club has reft their lives.
Struck by their leader's fall with strange dismay,
The circling squadrons break their firm array:
Rodmir and Witikind the moment found,
And shed redoubled streams of blood around;
Pierced the deep bosom of the hostile throng,
And fought to Iller's gorge their way along.

XL.

Half of the Saxons win a safe retreat,
Following their king; ere yet the dire defeat
Of that Helvetic band had reached the ears
Of mighty Charles, or slaughter of his peers:
Straight to the fatal scene he urged his horse,
And 'mid the loiterers of the flying force
Awakened new affright: the Franks, again
In circle formed, repel the Paynim train,
And close all egress from the battle plain.

XLI.

The king and Godfrey join their martial bands,
And give the Pagans to their murderous hands:
Neustria, Argentum, Suevia, wake their ire,
And bid the sacrilegious host expire.
The crowd of captives ask the Christian name . . .
The conqueror, from this hour, admits their claim,
As sons adopts them, and consoles their woes . . .
Night o'er these mournful plains her mantle throws;
A needful rest the conquering army stills/
Far off the vanquished climb the silent hills.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XVI.

NIGHT OF THE SEVENTIETH DAY.

Translated by Dr. Butler.

ARGUMENT.

Oak and funeral pile of Irmensul. The son of Heral. Celestial apparition. Prophetic vision of the descendants of Witikind.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XVI.

I.

"*QUICK be the victims to Irmensul paid;*
"*So may our god, the god of conquest, aid!*
"*In blood of Berenger and Ulric slain*
"*Bathe we our swords, and Fate shall smile again.*"
From Ormez' frantic mouth the sounds proceed,
That bid his captives to Irmensul bleed:
Fiercer and bloodier in disastrous times,
Fell superstition leads to deepest crimes.
Thus Ormez now from terror hopes success,
As round the wild impatient Germans press;
An impious troop, that from the field had fled,
Now far from Witikind to murder led.

II.

Rodmir and Witikind the heights explore,
And seek their way through steeps untrod before:
They know that Theudon and his savage band
Have crossed already through the Saxon's land;
Themselves would hasten towards the Rhine their flight,
But, from the perils 'scaped of many a fight,
Their harassed troops seek some repose from war,
Camped in the sombre forests of Vennar:
While the two chiefs, as o'er the heights they stray,
With looks impatient watch the rising day.

III.

" *Quick be the victims to Irmensul paid;*
" *So may our god, the god of conquest, aid!*
" *In blood of Berenger and Ulric slain*
" *Bathe we our swords, and Fate shall smile again.*"
Thundered once more, the deep portentous sound
Rolls on the silence of the night profound.
By blazing pines a fearful glare is cast,
The crowds assemble in tumultuous haste;
O'er Ormez' tent funereal garlands rise,
And mark the near unhallowed sacrifice.

IV.

Since Witikind had rescued Heral's child,
Oft had Irmensul's priest, with accents wild,
Reclaimed his destined victim, in whose stead
Unnumbered captives at the shrine had bled.
Vain other deaths, vain other victims all,
Ulric, the last of Suevia's race, must fall.
" Ulric alone," cries Ormez, " heaven demands,
" And claims the prompt obedience of your hands."
Mad from defeat, and more remorseless grown,
Scarce does the blood-stained priest respect the throne.

V.

" Saxons," he cries, " to stay the wrath divine
" Ulric must bleed at dread Irmensul's shrine:
" Thither with Berenger your victim bring,
" Nor heed the guilty pity of your king.
" Haste, Saxons! Heaven commands! dismiss delay,
" And bear young Ulric from the tent away.
" Less grief will touch your sovereign for the deed,
" If in his absence Heral's offspring bleed,
" And bleed he must, though Witikind oppose;
" Your monarch in his god his master knows."

VI.

The sacred knife is borne in Ormez' hand,
Around their chief the gathered Druids stand:
Impatient for the sight the crowd succeed,
And in the midst an aged warrior lead;
Feeble his frame, and weak his steps appear,
As bowed by sorrow, not subdued by fear.
Him to an oak's gigantic trunk they bind,
With many a cord and hard-drawn knot confined,
Then gathering round with savage yells prolong
The fatal burden of Irmensul's song.

VII.

Ormez draws near: he lifts the murderous knife,
Aims the fell plunge, and strikes his captive's life;
Then o'er the oak's huge trunk and branches wide
Pours, with polluted hands, the crimson tide.
Shout after shout from rock to rock succeeds,
When lo, a Druid towards the assembly speeds,
(Foam on his lips, and vengeance in his eyes:)
"Ormez! the traitors outrage heaven," he cries;
"Ulric they dare withhold: an impious band
"Swear to preserve him, and thy power withstand.

VIII.

"Degenerate Saxons! me they scorned to hear,
"And Meledin presumptuous raised his spear.
"'Our prince,' he cries, 'vouchsafed the youth to spare,
"'Till his return be Ulric's life our care.
"'Captives enough may wait the fatal stroke,
"'Round the dread circle of Irmensul's oak:
"'There let your chief the veteran Frank destroy;
"'But harm not—touch not—hope not for the boy.
"'Ulric, adopted by our prince, may claim
"'Assured protection from the royal name.'"

IX.

Loved by his king was Meledin, his life
He saved, like Ulric's, from the fatal knife.
Ormez had seized him once, and borne away
This youthful Marcoman Irmensul's prey:
But Witikind beheld; his tender years
He spared, unbound his chains, and soothed his fears:
And Meledin now seeks, in Heral's son,
To save a life devoted like his own.
Vainly let Ormez rave with curses wild,
The friend of Witikind must guard the child.

X.

Dark at the name of Meledin was seen
On Ormez' brow the scowl of baffled spleen.
His rash resistance of the barbarous rite
Is only deeper guilt in Ormez' sight.
"Hear me, Irmensul's sons! an impious slave
"Presumes," he cries, "your priests, your god to brave:
"Punish the crime, or heavenly vengeance dread:
"Irmensul wills that Ulric's blood be shed.
"Follow me, Saxons, follow as I lead,
"Avenge your god, and let the victim bleed.

XI.

"*Who shall our holy rites, our god defy?*
"*Devoted by our touch, the captives die.*
"Saxons, the customs of your sires enforce,
"And let your prince unlearn this weak remorse;
"This timid mercy, this reluctance vain;
"Respect our ancient laws, or cease to reign.
"I ask the victim of your god—restore—
"Avenge his honour, or return no more.
"Abandoned by your god, with morning's ray
"Shall the Franks sweep your lives and hopes away."

XII.

Each Saxon's heart is chilled with holy fear,
As Ormez' dread anathema they hear.
Scorning their prince, with shouts that rend the air,
The maddening crowd in Ormez' transports share,
Rush on his steps impetuous to the tent,
With looks of rage, and hearts on murder bent.
Ulric at once a thousand voices name,
Ulric, the victim of their god, reclaim.
"His blood, to stay the wrath of Heaven, must flow;
"Woe to the arm that shelters Ulric... woe!"

XIII.

Gliding like spectres from their dark recess,
To Ormez' side the white-robed Druids press,
Their long loose garments glimmer on the sight,
Now dimly viewed, now lost in dusky night.
Clearer anon in opening space they seem,
Shown by the cold moon's melancholy beam.
Such are the phantom shapes at evening tide
Which fancy scatters o'er the mountains' side,
And marks their floating forms, their waving shrouds,
Sink in the vales, or mingle with the clouds.

XIV.

The friends of Witikind in haste unite
To rescue Ulric from the fatal rite.
Vain wish! Young Meledin the foremost stands,
And rallies round the tent his wavering bands.
Himself incapable of flight or fear,
Marshals their ranks, and braves the tempest near.
Awhile he checks the murderers on their way,
But Ormez' threats the stoutest hearts dismay.
Again his dread anathemas resound,
And wake to vengeance thousand Saxons round.

XV.

The generous Marcoman with anguish sees
His troop divide and lessen by degrees.
Some on their palfreys in disorder spring,
And bear the fatal tidings to their king.
Some on the rude barbarians gaze, and dread
Irmensul's vengeance on the opposer's head.
Then, lowly bent, at Ormez' feet they lay
Their bloodless swords, and own Irmensul's sway.
Their prayers avail not: Meledin alone
Guards, for his absent sovereign, Heral's son.
Brave and resolved he waits the foe's advance,
And dares at Ormez' breast direct his lance.

XVI.

Vain was thy spear, brave Meledin! It flew
Fatal to thee, but to its aim untrue.
Onwards, to madness fired, the Saxons rush,
And countless swarms the bold assailant crush;
Torn from the mangled trunk his members bleed,
While Druids smile, and consecrate the deed.
Ormez, meantime, with hasty steps and rude
Dares on the royal tent alone intrude.
Entering, on Ulric stern his glance he cast,
Locked in sweet sleep, and soon to sleep his last.

XVII.

Won from a bear, despoiler of the fold,
Thick sable fur, with claws of burnished gold,
Spread o'er a couch with purple bordered deep,
Held Heral's offspring wrapt in balmy sleep.
Pure were the slumbers of the guiltless child,
In sweet oblivion lost, serene he smiled.
Beside his couch the monarch's arms appear,
The polished javelins and the ponderous spear.
Alas, now useless in the hour of need,
They witness only, not prevent the deed.

XVIII.

Ormez draws near: he grasps the slumbering boy,
Holds him aloft, and smiles with fiend-like joy;
Thunders again Irmensul's ruthless song,
And rocks and woods a thousand yells prolong.
Soon started Ulric from his soft repose:
The clash of arms tumultuous round him rose.
The torches' glare, the people's frantic yell,
Ormez' rude grasp, grim smile, and accents fell,
At once the soul of Heral's child dismayed,
Whose plaintive cries resound, in vain, for aid.

XIX.

On Witikind he calls, convulsed with fear,
Nor Witikind, nor Meledin, can hear.
Then lays his trembling hand in mute despair
On Ormez' breast, to touch the marble there.
Vain hope! no prayers can Ormez' bosom move;
He bears his prey triumphant to the grove,
Opes the dread osier of Irmensul wide, (1)
And shuts the screaming captive in its side.
While round barbaric shouts exulting rise,
And savage yells o'erpower the victim's cries.

XX.

Swift as the fatal tidings are conveyed,
The Saxon monarch flies to Ulric's aid.
Silent and sad his friends his course pursue,
And soon the fatal forest meets their view.
Through the wild tangles of the wood they mark
The reddening flame, the smoke in volumes dark.
Urging with breathless haste their well-tried steeds,
O'er the wide plain the royal troop proceeds.
And first, his sword uplifted in his hand,
Their prince advances towards the impious band.

XXI.

With horror chilled, he hears their voices rise,
Discordant yells, and shouts that rend the skies;
Then sees, beneath the forest's central gloom,
Irmensul's fatal esier, Ulric's tomb.
"Hold, traitors, hold!" he cries, in wild despair,
"Dread, miscreants, dread my rage, my Ulric spare!"
Struck with the voice, irresolute they stand,
Gaze, pause, and tremble at their king's command;
Suspend their horrid dance, their barbarous cries,
And cease awhile their hateful sacrifice.

XXII.

Around the pile the priests in tumult press,
Silent the soldiers stand, and motionless.
"Subdue," cries Ormez, "these repinings vain,
"Rash prince, nor dare our hallowed round profane.
"The captive's blood secures Irmensul's aid,
"Respect the laws thy valiant sires have made.
"*Who shall our god, who shall his priests defy?*
"*Devoted by our touch, the captives die.*
"Seek not a feeble victim's life to save,
"Heaven only smiles propitious on the brave."

XXIII.

He grasped his sword, his heart with fury burned,
Yet from the priest his looks the monarch turned.
Still, though in wrath, Irmensul he reveres;
When from the pile a piercing scream he hears.
From Ulric's lips that shriek of anguish came,
Scorched by the tortures of the rising flame.
The well known accents, in the monarch's soul,
Awake despair, and rage above control.
Onward he drives amain, with brandished blade,
And calls on Rodmir and his friends for aid.

XXIV.

Rent is the veil: his gods he fears not now,
And Ormez' blood for Ormez' crimes shall flow.
But round their priest unite the pagan crew,
And shield the monster from the vengeance due.
Albion, and Rodmir, and Armelia stand
Their sovereign's fence against the impious band.
These bore their monarch from the crowd, and sought
With gentlest speech to soothe his troubled thought.
Following their steps unconscious as he went,
Silent and sad, he gained his lonely tent.

XXV.

"What are the gods we Saxons serve," he cries,
"Gods that delight in human sacrifice!
"The Frank his prostrate foes indulgent spares,
"His wealth, his heart, with those he conquered, shares;
"Restores them happier to their native land,
"And melts to kindness at his God's command.
"But we no mercy to the vanquished show,
"And bid their guiltless blood, unpitying, flow.
"Irmensul steels our callous hearts to prayer,
"And plants remorseless hate and vengeance there.
"His daring priests my power each day defy,
"And in my sight devote my friends to die.

XXVI.

"Too long have Ormez' bonds debased my soul:
"Yield we our sceptre to the priest's control,
"Or, in the path which Suevia's sons have trod,
"Burst we our chains, and own the Christian's God.
"Still on my thought the warning accents dwell,
"From generous Heral's dying lips which fell.
"Cheerful himself, for me he wept, his foe,
"'O may'st thou yet,' he cried, 'the gospel know.
"'Doctrines of blood suit ill thy noble mind...
"'My child I leave thee...and I die resigned.'

XXVII.

"He left his child ... alas, the charge he gave
"My sovereign power was all too weak to save.
"If Ormez' guilt unpunished still remain,
"I bear a pageant crown, a title vain.
"No ... let me vindicate my injured throne,
"For Ormez' crimes let Ormez' life atone.
"Myself will strike ... the foul delusion's o'er,
"My heart adores those murderous gods no more.
"A new, a mightier power directs the stroke
"That frees myself, my people, from their yoke."

XXVIII.

Thus thought the Saxon prince, with purpose vain,
To break at once the fierce Irmensul's chain.
Alas, revenge and hate his bosom fill,
And, slave to these, he serves Irmensul still.
Oft as the bleeding forms before his eyes
Of murdered Meledin and Ulric rise,
A thousand projects on his soul intrude:
How best to calm the frantic multitude,
And in the death the rebel Druids feel
The wrongs of outraged majesty to heal.

XXIX.

Soon as the Saxons, with returning light,
Renew their toilsome march on Never's height,
Led by himself, a chosen band shall press
On ruthless Ormez, in Vennar's recess.
Then shall the rebel priest his sovereign know,
Whose own right hand shall deal the avenging blow.
Soft sleep, at length, which every grief can calm,
Sheds o'er his wounded soul its healing balm:
Wearied with care and thought, his eyes he closed,
And on his murdered Ulric's couch reposed.

XXX.

Scarce had he sunk to rest, a heavenly ray
Shot through the tent the living blaze of day.
Before him stands, arrayed in splendour bright,
A virgin form, and awes his troubled sight.
Mild is her aspect, and composed her air,
Her hands the Code of Heaven—the Gospel bear:
A mystic crown upon her temples shone,
Three bands of radiant gold combined in one.
Holding a golden cross, beside her smiled
An angel youth—'twas he—'twas Heral's child.

XXXI.

Lost in the floods of light around him spread,
Breathless, amazed, the monarch lifts his head.
With look benign the child of Heaven displays
The radiant cross before his father's gaze:
And royal Witikind, in rapture, pressed
The heavenly orphan to his beating breast.
"To thee," with voice celestial, Ulric cries,
"To thee, my sire, descend we from the skies:
"Receive eternal treasure at our hands,
"The laws of Christ, the living God's commands."

XXXII.

Then, with majestic pace, the heavenly maid
Approached the couch on Ulric's steps, and said,
"Receive the seal of Heaven's elect, and hear
"Its laws, nor more the powers of darkness fear.
"To thee exhaustless blessings Heaven extends,
"And in thy favour nature's laws suspends.
"Lo, clothed in human form, from realms of light,
"Religion stands, embodied, in thy sight.
"Hear me, my son; let thy conversion win
"The northern nations from their yoke of sin.

XXXIII.

" At length behold thy gods, and blush with shame:(2)
" What service does Irmensul, Odin, claim?
" *War they command, still war, without repose,*
" *And blood, still blood, from unresisting foes.*
" Ye shut your hearts to virtue's gentler voice,
" And in the tortured captive's groan rejoice.
" Nor age, nor helpless infancy ye spare,
" And double all the murderous rage of war.
" Nor peace, nor love, nor clemency ye know,
" But let your days in mad contention flow.

XXXIV.

" *To love mankind, to seek with all for peace,*
" *To bid revenge, and wrath, and discord cease;*
" *Wrongs to forget, and passions to restrain,*
" *Forgive the vanquished and console his pain:*
" These laws, O royal Witikind, are mine;
" These laws alone are pure, alone divine.
" Sent for thy guide, by nature's Lord, O king,
" The choicest treasures, Heaven's own Code, I bring.
" Now for new miracles thine eyes prepare,
" The seal of Heaven, that stamps the truth I bear."

XXXV.

She spoke, and on the monarch's front impress
The sacred cross, the Christian's emblem blest.
Thrice flash the beams of glory on his sight,
And fill the tent with radiant floods of light.
Peopling the vast pavilion, to his eyes
The sceptred forms of shadowy kings arise.
Duly their ranks were placed, and 'midst them reared
The Christian's glorious sign, the cross, appeared;
But the last rank in lowering darkness showed
Dim crowns and broken sceptres red with blood.

XXXVI.

"Daughter august of Heaven, O speak," he cries,
"Whence may this scene of awful wonders rise?
"What secret charms their soft delusion spread,
"And bring my cherished Ulric from the dead?
"What may these heroes mean, this regal band,
"That crowd my tent, and duly marshalled stand?
"Say, does the grave these too for me restore?
"Touched by their sight, thy words affect me more.
"What interests hold these monarchs in my fate,
"Why stand they here, arrayed in sceptred state?"

XXXVII.

"My son," the heavenly visitant replies,
"Full thirty Christian monarchs meet thine eyes.
"Bourbons, Capets, whom future years shall see
"Successive kings of France, and sprung from thee.
"Thy favoured lot through unborn ages trace,
"And read the distant glories of thy race.
"I bend thee not a vassal to my will,
"Hear thou my voice, but be a sovereign still.
"Thy grandsons will I seat on France's throne:
"My laws the fiery Redmir will disown.
"But my fond fostering care his brother's youth
"Protects, and Robert shall embrace the truth.

XXXVIII.

"Kings sprung from him o'er twenty lands shall reign; (3)
"One of his blood by valiant deeds shall gain
"The suffrage of his peers, and Hugh's renown
"From Charles's feeble race shall wrest their crown.
"Such is the change by Heaven in empires made,
"And dynasties arise, decline, and fade.
"Some, weakened by the lapse of years, decay;
"Others succeed, and pass like these away.
"Thrice happy they, to whom a throne resigned
"Leaves the pure sunshine of a guiltless mind.

XXXIX.

" See'st thou yon hero, round whose sainted head
" The halo's beams in radiant glory spread?
" Twice shall he seek from Saracens unblest
" To rescue Sion, by their yoke oppress.
" Long has my guardian care his throne designed
" With just decrees to reconcile mankind.
" He to each Christian land shall counsel peace,(4)
" And but with life from virtuous labour cease.
" When for my sake, on Afric's burning soil,
" Shall my loved Louis close his life of toil.

XL.

" Another Louis mark, whose look reveals
" The gentle goodness which his bosom feels.
" No wrongs his patient clemency can bend,
" And in each subject he shall find a friend.
" Alas, what tears in that sad hour shall flow,
" When like deserted orphans, lost in woe,
" His people round his tomb shall weep, and own
" A better monarch never graced a throne.
" His youth severe adversity shall train, (5)
" Goodness herself shall with the sovereign reign.

XLI.

" In virtue less, but more in fame renowned,
" His young successor mark, with laurels crowned.
" His rivals at his feet shall bend awhile,
" And on his reign the dawning arts shall smile.
" But soon, alas, to pleasure's snares inclined,
" Ardent in youth, with headstrong passions blind,
" He shall the tempting treacherous steep essay,
" Nor even when captive my commands obey.
" But, moved by courtiers' pleas unjust and weak,
" His solemn oath and plighted faith shall break. (6)

XLII.

"Six lustres more, Lorenzo's race shall dare
"Profane with blood the sacred code I bear.
"Hell shall the germ of civil discord sow,
"And desolate the realm with guilt and woe.
"O days of mourning! days of deathless shame,
"Eternal blot to thy descendants' fame.
"An impious female shall direct the deed,
"A stranger doom devoted France to bleed,
"And, adding blasphemy to guilt, command (7)
"In Heaven's blest name what fiends alone have planned.
"Yes...France shall offer, at her fatal nod,
"A people-victim to the Christian's God.

XLIII.

"Mark'st thou, my son, yon prince with sullen brow?
"'Tis the ninth Charles whose joyless front I show.
"Sinking so young beneath a load of crime,
"Despair and death await him ere his prime.
"Irmensul's spells shall o'er his reason press,
"And while his lips the Christian's God confess,
"Far from the Christian's God his heart shall stray,
"And stern Irmensul's bloodstained laws obey.
"But, son, my gentle laws all blood disown,
"And murder is the work of Hell alone.

XLIV.

"Oft as from human passions wrongs proceed,
"To Heaven the scoffer dares impute the deed.
"Thus hate and prejudice in after times
"Shall tax God's righteous laws with human crimes.
"While to my charge the woes of France they place,
"A stranger sect shall Henry's youth embrace.
"But heavenly justice shall be moved to spare,
"And take his virtues to its fostering care.
"Before the King of Kings his humbled brow (8)
"Ere yet he fall, on ruin's verge shall bow.

XLV.

"He shall add brighter honours to thy race,
"Led by my love, enlightened by my grace.
"See'st thou yon cloud around him dimly spread,
"Whose scattered mist before my torch has fled?
"To him, like thee, my influence shall impart
"Its secret blessing, shall direct his heart,
"Bid heavenly truths by heavenly light be shown,
"And ope the path before him to the throne,
"Chained at his feet bid raving discord lie,
"And France rejoice beneath a fairer sky.

XLVI.

"His sons shall reap the harvest of his fame,
"And with strong arm rebellious faction tame.
"To grace their ample reign two priests shall come
"Decked with the purple of illustrious Rome.(9)
"By these instructed, valiant, just, and mild,
"Obedient to my laws, my favourite child
"Shall reign, the greatest of the Bourbon line, (10)
"And France like Greece, and ancient Latium, shine:
"Shot from this glorious sun shall countless rays,
"Heroes and sages, 'mid Lutetia blaze.

XLVII.

"In these Augustan days, great Louis' age,
"People and warriors, nobles, prince, a sage,
"The voice of God's blest ministers shall hear,
"And check the scorner with rebuke severe.
"But after him, alas, too quickly spread,
"Fierce Atheism shall rear her venomed head,
"Midst Paris' walls shall stretch her conquests wide
"O'er spirits drunk with science and with pride.
"These on her mission shall like prophets go,
"Preparing for mankind long years of woe.

XLVIII.

"Then for thy sons the world shall weep... but thou,
"For this thy distant race, repine not now.
"To Christians even misfortune's self has charms;
"My power the sharpest sting of death disarms:
"With meteor's speed your pilgrimage is o'er,
"Ye rise, ye flourish, and are seen no more.
"Heaven is your home, and if that home ye gain,
"What boot some chequered hours of bliss or pain?
"Your days on earth in short probation past
"Shall reap their rich reward in Heaven at last.

XLIX.

"Thy sons shall in my sheltering bosom rest.
"Meantime do thou fulfil my high behest.
"Thyself and thine embrace the Christian creed:
"To the Frank's camp with fearless step proceed,
"There seek admission to the Christian fold,
"And bid thine heart, in holy ardour bold,
"Receive the grace of Heaven: with morning's light
"I wait thy presence at the sacred rite."
She ended: from the cloud the lightning flies,
Strikes, and dissolves the daughter of the skies.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XVII.

FROM THE SEVENTY-FIRST TO THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Translated by Dr. Butler.

ARGUMENT.

Camp of the Huns. Battle of the Rings. Spoil of the Huns. Tassillon, duke of Bavaria, at the feet of Charlemagne.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XVII.

I.

ALREADY roused from sleep, with morning's spring
The Saxon chiefs in council meet their king.
But, spite of baffled rage and menace vain,
No entrance there could gloomy Ormez gain.
Dreading his outraged sovereign's wrath, he sought
His tent's retirement, lost in silent thought:
There on his god his haggard eyes he rolled,
Whose hands a chain and gory poniard hold.
A crown adorns the monster idol's head,
Whose guidance oft the Saxon march has led.

II.

Rodmir before him stands, impetuous chief,
His words no utterance find, for rage and grief.
He stops, he stamps, and twice the echoing ground,
Struck with his ponderous lance, returns the sound.
At last a long-drawn groan relieved his breast,
And thus the prince Irmensul's priest addrest:
"O dark eternal stain upon our race!
"Hear, Ormez, hear, the foulest, last disgrace!
"My sire and his, the Christian rite demand,
"And peace and baptism seek at Charles's hand.

III.

"My sire's renown and long-earned glories fade...
"His god dishonoured, and his realm betrayed;
"Such bitter fruits these impious counsels bear,
"For me, my only refuge is despair.
"If Witikind deserts me, let me give
"Each hour to love, and for Armelia live.
"Yes... love and hate alone each hour shall share,
"Love to Armelia, hate to Pepin's heir.
"War with the Franks, eternal war I vow;
"Ormez, be thou my guide... my father now.

IV.

"Not every heart is yet to glory lost,
"Albion has sworn to follow Rodmir's host:
"Even now a thousand spears our voice attend,
"From Iller's waving pines their course they bend.
"Soon may we reach the valiant Theudon's land;
"He and Tassillon lead a martial band,
"United for the war: ere falls the night
"Their floating banners shall salute our sight.
"Haste, may the God of Saxony betrayed
"Direct our path, and our just labours aid."

V.

While furious Rodmir gives his passion vent,
A thousand warriors crowd round Ormez' tent.
The name of Christian with tumultuous cry
They curse, and Charles, and Charles's God defy.
Armelia, Albion, lead the daring band:
Ormez their clamours stilled with lifted hand,
Then from Irmensul's front the crown unbound,
And placed on Rodmir's brows the glittering round.
And thus with vain anathema disowned
His sovereign's power, and Witikind dethroned.

VI.

"Woe to the wretch whom glory calls in vain!
"The apostate! Witikind, has ceased to reign!
"Mark we his guilt alone, forget his fame,
"And doom to Hell his memory and his name!
"Rodmir alone, brave Rodmir is our king;
"To Rodmir, knights, your swords, your homage
bring.
"Lo, by this crown Irmensul's will is shown,
"Transferred to Rodmir's temples from his own.
"His mighty arm Irmensul round him throws,
"And digs the grave that shall receive his foes."

VII.

Through the dark forest's shades tumultuous rise
The shock of shields, and loud approving cries.
They pass the troubled Rhine's impetuous tide,
They thread the tangled brakes on Fribourg's side;
And as the sun beneath the west declines,
They reach the wild Hercynia's waving pines:
There warlike Theudon's royal tent they found,
And nine-fold rings of peopled cars around.(1)
A camp that circled all the valley's space,
Where dwelt fierce Attila's unconquered race.

VIII.

Walls they disdained; their tented cars supplied
A rampart, which the foes and storms defied.
The custom of their sires they at ill retained;
Their wives, their children, in their camps were
trained.
Nine deep concentric lines of cars possest
The gathered plunder of the East and West,
The spoils from Europe and from Asia won,
Rome and Byzantium's tribute to the Hun.
These they ne'er quit, like Scythians as they roam,
And in their rings unite a camp and home.

IX.

The Huns, since Attila, stern conqueror, reigned,
Pannonia, Noricum's wild woods maintained;(2)
But France and Latium's happier climes desire,
Driven from the Rhine and Elbe by Charles's sire.
Theudon, whom France had with adoption graced,
His hopes in guile and dark-laid plots had placed.
Awhile a vassal, faithful to the laws,
He seemed devoted to fair knighthood's cause:
But when Tassilon's felon guilt was known,
By Theudon's flight were Theudon's treasons shown.

X.

His power the wandering tribes of Huns combines;
Greek, Lombard, Saxon, aid his dark designs.
Unpeopling all the north, his hordes he spreads,
Threatening the Rhine and rich Alsatia's meads.
There the barbarian hopes to fix his seat:
But when he hears the Saxon's late defeat
On Welan's plain, and, oh disastrous change!
From Rodmir learns his sire's conversion strange,
Theudon would fain retreat; his guilty fear
Trembles, and paints the Frank already near.

XI.

Rodmir in vain his terrors would subdue,
And wake his troubled soul to conquests new.
Charles, flushed with triumph and secure in power,
May fall, surprised in some unguarded hour.
No hopes like these arose in Theudon's breast,
Deaf to the counsels of his noble guest.
"No: of thy valiant sire's support bereft,
"No hopes," he cries, "are in resistance left.
"I doubt Bavaria's fickle prince, nor dare
"Alone, unaided, risk the weight of war.

XII.

" Foremost in plots, a braggart with his word,
" But wavering, false and recreant with the sword,
" Tassillon ever from the field withdraws,
" And joins the stronger, not the juster cause.
" I wait him on the Hercynian mounts in vain;
" Scarce shall he learn your loss on Welan's plain,
" And Strasbourg's capture, ere the oaths he swore,
" The leagues he formed, shall bind his soul no more.
" Far will his feeble scattered band retreat,
" And he, base slave, embrace the victor's feet.

XIII.

" With adverse fate 'tis folly to contend:
" No: rather for a time before it bend.
" Entering our forests now, with solemn rite
" Huns, Saxons, Danes, in common league unite.
" Let Charles advance to Latium's farthest plain;
" Though haply now invaded Aquitain
" Finds him fresh labours; but with morning's dawn
" Far from his vengeance be our troops withdrawn.
" In happier hour united let us meet;
" Then perish Charles—and be our joy complete."

XIV.

Thus Theudon spoke: Hercynia's woods afford
His Huns no refuge from the victor's sword.
And, spite of Rodmir, with returning light
Directs he to Pannonia's plains their flight.
But first, in honour of his valiant guest,
He bids his followers spread the royal feast.
Each at his word the splendid pomp prepares,
And torches blaze from twice ten thousand cars.
Around them gleam the treasures of the Hun,
Spoils from an hundred conquered monarchs won.

XV.

Purple and gold their mingled glows unite,
And gem-girt vases glitter on the sight;
The wine in silver goblets sparkles high,
And thousand flocks at Theudon's order die;
In thousand fires between the chariot lines
Whole forests blaze of ancient oaks and pines;
Round these their juicy viands they prepare,
And all his Huns in Theudon's banquet share.
Loud cries of joy through all their tents resound,
And waken wild Hercynia's echoes round.

XVI.

The king conducts Armelia to his car,
With Rodmir, Ormez, Albion, fierce in war.
With lavish hand around his tent were spread
Arabia's pearls, and Tyre's refulgent red;
And India's gems, that glow with native fires,
And golden cups, the plunder of his sires,
Rich with the gravings of a master's hand,
Renowned of old in Greek and Latian land,
Where many a god's and hero's form was traced,
Inglorious now, the barbarous banquet graced.

XVII.

To sad Armelia's mind the sight recalls
Her feast in Pavia's and Lutetia's walls.
Far different thoughts arise in Rodmir's soul,
As through the cars his ardent glances roll,
And mark the Huns inactive loitering round;
Sudden he feels his heart with transports bound:
He burns to lead them to the tented field.
" O prince," he cries, " to Rodmir's instance yield;
" Let those who list my toils and fortunes share,
" And with the morning follow me to war.

XVIII.

"Far from Germania must I wander now,
"Or see my father bend his silvered brow
"Beneath the Latin's yoke—but Rodmir's rage
"Shall ne'er intrude upon his drooping age—
"I march towards Tiber's banks—and since repress
"Thine anger sleeps awhile within thy breast,
"While to their native woods thy Huns retire,
"Let some brave youths, who burn with martial fire,
"Beneath my banners to the war proceed;
"Secure at home, their aid thou canst not need."

XIX.

Theudon consents; and thus by herald's voice
Proclaims the service to his people's choice:
"Hear, noble Huns! whoe'er with morning's light
"Following Armelia's banner in the fight
"Would march to Rome, on glorious conquest bent,
"Let him come forth before the royal tent."
Instant a murmur rises through the host,
Like distant surges rushing on the coast,
And soon two thousand warlike youths advance,
Wave the bright sword, and poise the beaming lance.

XX.

Armelia views the gay, the gallant train,
And feels her sinking hopes revive again.
"Yes, then," she cries, "with heroes compassed round
"I seek my sire, for war and vengeance bound.
"Forced from the north, our sorrow 'twill assuage
"To leave the deep memorials of our rage
"Since fly we must, let battles mark our path,
"Like some remorseless conqueror's in his wrath,
"Till one wide waste the ravaged land appears,
"Drenched in man's blood, and bathed with woman's tears."

XXI.

She spoke; her looks, her charms, her speech excite
New zeal and courage in each youthful knight.
'Twixt Ormez' hands they pledge their gloomy troth,
Rodmir and Theudon, and pronounce their oath.
The nights in feasts and barbarous mirth is past,
And soon the trumpet's hoarse resounding blast
Announces morn: the auxiliar troop proceeds,
Two thousand Huns, whom valiant Eric leads.
Eric and Rodmir with the dawning light
Quit the Hun's camp, and seek the distant fight.

XXII.

Theudon meanwhile towards Augsburg bends his way,
Which owns Bavaria's duke, Tassillon's sway.
Prompt at his word the Huns their march prepare,
And each with rapid course directs his car.
With rival speed their circling ranks unbend,
Their wives and children with their warriors blend.
Through vast Hercynia's hills and woods profound,
The lash of thongs and roll of cars resound,
And as their discord gathers on the sky,
The trembling peasants from their hamlets fly.

XXIII.

Thrice sunk the sun beneath the western main,
Ere Veder's lake the hordes of Theudon gain. (3)
There on the reedy shore he traced the round,
The mighty circuit of his car-girt mound.
Himself his tent upon the margin placed,
The gathering Huns around their sovereign haste;
Their ancient usage all precedence bars,
As each arrives they range their tented cars.
Nine times upon themselves their circles close,
While in the lawns their scattered steeds repose.

XXIV.

Theudon now hopes to gain with speedy flight
The walls of Augsburg ere a second night.
But Charles even now has touched the Danube's side;
For Witikind, in new-made league allied,
Renouncing fierce Irmensul's blood-stained shrine,
At Iller's camp has sought the Christian's sign.
Thus Peace unites the Frank and Saxon powers,
And Charles, forsaking Strasbourg's captured towers,
Seeks, through the forests of the north, to trace
The route of Theudon and his barbarous race.

XXV.

The Huns unconscious of their danger slept,
Their customed watch some scattered soldiers kept.
But o'er the people and the prince's head,
Night with full hands her drowsy poppies shed.
Leaving beneath the forest shade their steeds,
Charles with his warriors o'er the plain proceeds.
Slowly they march, and through the night profound,
They mark the circling cars in serried round.
Across the sterile flat their course they take,
And soon the borders reach of Veder's lake.

XXVI.

Silent towards Theudon's camp their way they keep,
Then halt upon the margin of the deep.
Charles gives the word, his troops at once enclose
With outspread wings the circles of their foes.
Thus in the woods, intent on sylvan spoils,
In distant round the hunters spread their toils;
Then nearer drawn contract the tangled space,
And rouse the forest monsters to the chase:
Now closer still in barrier firm unite,
And leave their baffled prey no hope of flight.

XXVII.

As the fierce eagle, darting from the skies,
With ruthless pounce upon the quarry flies:
Even so the Paladins, by Veder's coast,
At midnight darted on the Pagan host.
Fearless the sons of Attila reposed,
Till round their camp the Christian warriors closed.
On their first rank his banner Clermont raised,
Back to the second Theudon flies amazed,
There rallies to the fight his broken bands,
And midst their host, himself a bulwark, stands.

XXVIII.

Instant the cars are bristled round with spears,
An eight-fold wall with iron girt appears.
Deep in the midst a feeble throng retires,
The warriors' wives, their infants, and their sires.
Theudon with shouts exhorts his foremost ranks,
Thirsting for blood, to rush upon the Franks.
Montfort and ten brave knights at once advance,
Each falls in turn beneath the monarch's lance,
They bite the dust upon that fatal field,
While Theudon round him throws his ample shield.

XXIX.

The Christians halt, at Montfort's fall dismayed,
But Richard's heart revenge and passion swayed.
A mighty lance he seized, with sudden spring
Advanced, and hurled it furious at the king.
Fixed in his cuirass stood the ponderous dart,
And transport filled the knight's exulting heart.
Awhile conceived he Montfort's conqueror slain,
But Theudon from his cuirass wrenched amain
The steel-capt lance, and drove it at the foe,
While Richard shuddered at the coming blow.

XXX.

But brave Isolier checked its murderous flight,
His shield received and glanced it from the knight.
Meanwhile dismay and carnage Theudon spread
Through the Frank lines, and strewed the field with dead.
From ear to ear through all his host he flies,
Revenge and slaughter sparkling in his eyes.
His words, his looks, new strength in all inspire,
Before their foes the Franks awhile retire.
Their blood with crimson torrents dyes the plain,
Shed round the cars, and all their force is vain.

XXXI.

Thus did the impenetrable phalanx stand (4)
Of Sparta's sons, the bulwark of their land.
Charles views awhile these formidable walls,
Then to his side his brave companions calls.
"Follow my steps, my valiant peers," he cries,
"Bid o'er these rings our Christian banners rise.
"This day let Attila's barbarian hordes
"Drink deep the vengeance of our righteous swords.
"The Church, France, Europe, Asia's wrongs repay,
"And sweep at once this impious race away."

XXXII.

Thus as he spoke, upon the foe he flew,
With his own hands two warrior Huns he slew.
Following the bright example of their King,
Each knight before him clears the car-built ring.
Isolier seized a beam, the chariot's yoke,
Plied the strong lever, and the circle broke.
The loosened cars recoiled, all order lost,
The breach is filled at once by Charles' host.
With fixed attentive looks they wait his will,
Then rush upon the lines unbroken still.

XXXIII.

Nought can the Christians' fierce attack restrain,
Death mows their ranks, and decimates in vain.
Resting their only safety in success,
Ring after ring upon the Huns they press.
Thus in the forest, with unwearied stroke,
The panting woodman cleaves the stubborn oak,
His vigorous arm the wedge incessant drives,
Till the vast trunk with ceaseless blows he rives.
It cracks, it yawns, it falls with thundering sound,
And splintered fragments cover all the ground.

XXXIV.

Thus in succession forced, the rings afford
Unwilling entrance to the victor's sword.
Theudon, meanwhile, in distant fight engaged,
Amidst the falling Franks insulting raged.
Little he dreamt that their victorious king
Had burst the barriers of the ninefold ring.
But soon disastrous shrieks assail his ear,
And check his triumphs in their mid career.
He turns . . .'tis infant's wail, 'tis woman's cry . . .
O'er them the cross and lilies float on high.

XXXV.

Swift to the central ring's support he speeds;
His last reserve upon his steps succeeds.
Each strives at once to guard their last recess,
And thousand warriors to the centre press.
All to their wives, their children's succour fly,
And shouts and wild commotion rend the sky.
No more their monarch's voice they hear, nor care
For chiefs or order, lost in wild despair:
Upon their foes they rush with frantic cries,
And loss of every hope new hope supplies.

XXXVI.

The wives and children of the warriors slain,
Still from the cars a stubborn war maintain.
Dark fury in their souls to fear succeeds,
And Theudon's spouse their vengeful transports feeds.
Batilda, sprung from Denmark's royal line,
Was there, the priestess of Irmensul's shrine.
Irmensul still her troubled soul possest,
In this dread hour, and ruled her frantic breast.
The matrons of the Huns, around their queen,
Forgetful of their sex, in arms are seen.

XXXVII.

Her long loose tresses float upon the wind,
As, pale with rage, and with presumption blind,
Armed with sharp-pointed steel, she strives to wield
The polished ash, and fills with yells the field:
The female Huns, distracted, crowd around,
And cries on cries, and shrieks on shrieks resound.
Upon the Franks they shower their darts in vain,
Their idle rage the conquering Franks disdain;
In firm battalions round the circle close,
And hem, within their last recess, their foes.

XXXVIII.

Wide spreads the carnage with the morning's light;
The scattered Pagans rally to the fight.
The ring one glittering wall of steel appears,
Shields locked with shields, and spears enlaced with spears.
Like some tall cedar, in the midst is seen
Theudon, of towering height and haughty mien:
His giant form a giant's strength supplies:
Him Pepin's offspring marks with stedfast eyes.
"Great God, for whom I fight, thine aid impart,"
He cries, "O nerve mine arm, and steel my heart."

XXXIX.

He spoke, and forwards like an arrow flew,
Scarce can his bravest knights his steps pursue;
Scorning the cloud of darts and arrowy storm,
Onward he rushed where stood the giant form
Of Theudon, rage and slaughter in his look,
As with strong arm his glittering blade he shook,
And marked for death the bosom of his foe;
But with his shield Charles turned the murderous blow.
Then poised his weighty spear: with sudden spring
Advanced, and launched it at the Pagan king.

XL.

Not vain the stroke; his triple cuirass showed
Where the dark blood in reeking current flowed.
Unmoved seemed Theudon by the pain, and found
Fresh strength and fire enkindled by the wound:
Grasping, with both his hands, his mace of steel,
He seeks one desperate, fatal blow to deal.
Charles springs aside, and shuns with nimble bound
The coming stroke; in earth, with sullen sound,
Deep sinks the mace, and Theudon quits it there,
Cursing his gods in impotent despair.

XLI.

Onward impetuous springs the chief of France,
And hurls with vigorous arm his well-poised lance;
On Theudon's breast-plate rung the fatal dart,
Pierced deep, and drank the life-blood of his heart;
One sudden cry, one lengthened groan profound,
From Theudon's lips announced the deadly wound:
He staggers, reels, and bends his haughty brow,
Sinking and pale, and damp with death-dews now,
His hand one instant to the wound applies,
Then falls before the victor's feet, and dies.

XLII.

A groan of terror through the Huns was spread,
And chilled the stoutest warrior's heart with dread.
Before the monarch of the Franks they yield,
None dares to meet the victor in the field.
Like trembling flocks before the forest's lord,
So fly the Huns before the hero's sword.
The ears, that bend with many a mangled corse
Of slaughtered Huns, the conquering Christians force,
And Charles beholds, in this their last retreat,
Women, and babes, and warriors at his feet.

XLIII.

The queen of Theudon, frantic, wild, dismayed,
In her own bosom plunged the murderous blade.
Wide through the camp the queen's example spread,
And, self-destroyed, a thousand matrons bled:
The rest implore the generous chief to spare,
And Charles in mercy listens to their prayer;
Through the wide camp proclaims returning peace,
By Omfroi's voice, and bids the carnage cease.
And thus one day a nation's pride has tamed,
Through many an age in ceaseless conquest famed.

XLIV.

Charles views the hard-earned trophies of their toil
Borne to his feet, collected ages' spoil.
Load after load they heap the wealth untold,
Silver and purple, gems and sculptured gold.
Charles from the mass selects, with pious care,
The sacred vessels which the signet bear
Of Christian worship; these the Huns of yore,
With impious hands, from God's own altar tore:
Cups, censers, all that holy oil had blessed,
All with the symbol of the faith impressed.

XLV.

" This hour our vow's fulfilment is begun;
" Torn from our altars by the barbarous Hun,
" We give the spoils of Attila, restored
" To their blest use, the service of the Lord."
Thus spake the king; from all the listening crowd
Rose glad consent and acclamations loud.
The sacred gifts selecting from the prey,
His offering each with triumph bears away:
One spot contains the consecrated heap,
O'er which the guardian holy banners sweep.

XLVI.

Three sacred treasures claim peculiar care,
From that glad multitude and Pepin's heir.
That golden orb, where Constantine pourtrayed
The Pagan gods, abashed, o'erthrown, dismayed.
(Ten soldiers scarce could bear the mighty load:)
There, of his thunder reft, Olympus' god,
His brothers, of their tridents spoiled, maintain
No empire now, but wear the servile chain.
And, for the heavenly form Apelles gave,
Seem demons sent from Hell's profoundest cave.

XLVII.

Christ o'er the globe appears, his red right hand
With thunder armed, to strike the apostate band:
The Virgin at his knees entreats for grace,
A mother's goodness beaming in her face.
When Attila, stern conqueror, led his powers,
Threatening with ruin pale Byzantium's towers,
This tribute then the fearful Cæsar paid, (5)
And with rich gifts the march of rapine stayed.
Northward the spoiler turned his course again,
And wasted all from Mentz to Milan's plain.

XLVIII.

In that dread course of spoil, the victor fell
Bore from the towers of Rheims a silver shell,
Memorial of Clotilda's faith, where shone
Rich graven gold, and richer India's stone.
Fierce Clovis, conqueror of his foes in fight,
From this received the pure baptismal rite.
Happy, thrice happy, had that water blest (6)
Dissolved the flinty hardness of his breast;
The rugged fierceness of his soul subdued,
And gently changed his spirit wild and rude.

XLIX.

Near Clovis' font the Franks devoutly bear
That cross, which Helena's religious care
Found, ages past, on Calvary's hallowed side,
Where God's blest Son, mankind's Redeemer, died.
A Pontiff, famed for eloquence divine, (7)
Bore, from Byzantium's walls to Milan's shrine,
The precious gift a Cæsar erst bestowed,
Waked to remorse, and penitent for blood.
The Hun beheld the gems and gold alone
That round it glowed, and made the spoil his own.

L.

Around the sacred cross the zealous Franks,
With holy ardour, crowd from all their ranks:
Each seeks to worship where his Saviour bled;
The knights advance, the sovereign at their head.
Long time he bends in prayer, then joyful cries,
"Comrades, behold our great, our glorious prize;
"Immortal triumph of the Christian's sword!
"Lo, Sion's holiest treasure here restored.
"Advancing now beneath new Sion's wall,
"Let Didier, by our arms, like Theuden fall.

LI.

"One day will base Tassillon's lot decide:
"Vainly shall Augsburg's walls the traitor hide.
"The next, victorious o'er the Pagan powers,
"We quit the north, to rescue Latium's towers.
"Crushed by your arm, no more Irmensul's host,
"Combined in impious league and impious boast
"With Rome's oppressor, shall our purpose stay;
"No foes shall more our glorious course delay:
"Bound by our vows, till at the Apostles' tomb
"We kneel, deliverers of the Church and Rome.

LII.

"Yes! I shall that blest sepulchre behold,
"Rich with my valiant father's gifts of old:
"There bring this triple-hallowed offering, won
"By our good swords, the trophies of the Hun.
"Yes, my brave peers! for harder toils prepare,
"Expect no rest from perils and from war,
"Till, as the altar's sacred steps we press,
"Rome's sovereign priest our high exploits shall bless,
"Bind a new crown upon my brows, and shed
"The sacred oil, with blessings, on my head."

LIII.

He spoke; and at his word his soldiers feel
Fresh courage warm their hearts, and holy zeal;
At once forgetting all their labours past,
Towards Augsburg's walls with ready steps they haste.
But first their comrades, in the battle slain,
Yet scattered round, unburied on the plain,
Demand sepulchral rights and pious care:
Charles bids his Franks the funeral pomp prepare;
The solemn chant, the sad survivor's tear,
Pay the last tribute to the hero's bier.

LIV.

These duties done, they share the glorious spoil,
The well-earned recompense that crowns their toil.
Rescued from death, the captive tribes are sent
To people Rhine's waste shores; the wandering tent
Changing for cities, midst their conquerors placed,
To gentler manners they may turn at last.
Haply the radiant beams of gospel light
May dawn propitious on their Pagan night.
Thus the mild conqueror, from Hell's powers abhorred,
Whole nations gains to serve the living Lord.

LV.

Now dimly sunk beneath the Hercynian hill
The sun's broad disk, and all the world was still.
Fatigued with toil the Christians sought repose
Beneath the tents of their defeated foes.
In Theudon's car, with regal purple hung,
His wearied limbs Martel's great offspring flung,
To rest till morn: ten trusty knights and bold
Before the car their guardian vigil hold;
Visige their chief; whose band each knight around
The sacred person of their prince is found.

LVI.

Night doubled all Tassillon feared before:
The Saxons are subdued, the Huns no more.
A sombrous stupor all his sense o'erpowers,
He dreads the approach of Charles to Augsburg's towers.
Ashamed, withdrawn from all his subjects' eyes,
Far to his palace's recess he flies,
There to his wife confides his gloomy cares.
Ezelin with him the same alliance shares;
For each, by mutual interest swayed, had led
The fair Armelia's sister to his bed.

LVII.

One day the triple union saw, which lent
New hopes to Didier's soul, on vengeance bent.
Hate to Rome's pontiff and to Rome inspires
His dark revenge, and wild ambition fires.
His daughters, prompt to aid his vast design,
Each in his aims and daring plots combine.
Had Augsburg's sovereign listened to his queen,
Long since the Rhine upon its banks had seen
Midst the confederate powers his banners wave;
Such counsel Alfride, Didier's daughter, gave.

LVIII.

But danger weak Tassilon's soul dismayed,
And all the Hun's and Saxon's hopes betrayed.
Dreading the victor's vengeance now, he seeks
To soothe her fears, and thus to Alfride speaks:
"Haste, let us meet the fortune which we dread,
"And turn its force, by yielding, from our head:
"Feign we thy father's league forsook awhile,
"And hide our hate beneath dissembling guile;
"The conqueror's wonted clemency implore,
"And by prompt peace our ruined hopes restore.

LIX.

"Let not these vain regrets thy thought engage;
"Even had I yielded to thy noble rage,
"And joined the impetuous Hun's and Saxon's force,
"We had not stayed the victor in his course.
"No: they who France invade must better learn
"To count her monarch's absence and return.
"Scarce is his march from Paris' towers begun,
"Ere Weser's barriers by his sword are won.
"Rodmir, all fire, my calm advice disdained,
"His pride too soon its recompense has gained.

LX.

"For us a more propitious hour shall come,
"When Charles shall lead his powers to rescue Rome.
"Then shall we strike secure the fatal blow,
"Crossing the Rhine—we must dissemble now:
"To Charles present our city's keys, and hide
"Through all the neighbouring forests scattered wide
"Our numerous troops; disclaim the dark intrigue
"Which joined us with the Hun's and Saxon's league:
"To profit thus our wary caution bring,
"And blind the vengeance of an angry king."

LXI.

Little such counsel Alfride's spirit cheers;
She answers but with sighs, complaints, and tears:
But interest bids Bavaria's duke subdue
His fears, and at the victor's footstool sue.
Through night's dark shades, in silence and dismay,
Towards Veder's lake they bend their gloomy way.
Alfride partakes his journey and his care;
Armelia's sister may from Pepin's heir
Indulgence claim, his rigid wrath disarm,
And the stern victor's rage to mercy charm.

LXII.

Such was the hope that soothed Tassilon's fear:
Soon as the morning's earliest beams appear,
He reaches Theudon's camp, by Veder's strand;
Silent, dismayed, proceeds the attendant band.
Charles midst his peers receives the felon knight,
Marking his vassal's treason in their sight.
Princes and chiefs with common voice proclaim
The ancient guilt that brands Tassilon's name;
When, leagued in impious bands with Pepin's foes,
Against his lord the traitor vassal rose.

LXIII.

The cars, now desolate and stained with gore,
The warrior host that filled them, now no more,
His guilty soul with fearful awe subdue;
He enters; death on all sides meets his view,
In thousand hideous forms before him spread:
His scattered friends he marks among the dead:
These, sword in hand, amidst the slaughter lie,
As though even yet they would the foe defy;
Others still hang suspended from their cars,
Sweeping the dust, their foreheads gashed with scars.

LXIV.

The sight o'erpowers even Alfride's stubborn soul,
Down her wan cheeks the tears unbidden roll.
Silent and cold the conquering knights await
The traitor—in their looks he reads his fate.
In his disloyal breast no hope he feels,
But, trembling, at his sovereign's footstool kneels.
Beside him Alfride bends in mute despair,
And homage pays to Pepin's glorious heir.
Charles sees in her a form that once he loved,
And feels his heart to melting pity moved.

LXV.

"My liege," Tassillon cries, "thy vassal's prayer
"Accept indulgent, and in mercy spare.
"To challenge Roland, sire, I dared intrude
"Even on thy palace, with presumption rude:
"A sister's wrongs and wrath provoked my own,
"But, sire, I still was faithful to thy throne;
"Still to thyself in love and duty true,
"Grieved for Armelia's sorrows I withdrew:
"Reluctant left thy court; the Hun's advance
"O'er my own realms hath held me since from
France."

LXVI.

Charles broke his silence now with frown severe:
"What, hope you still, from these vain words I hear?
"Weak are they now, and impotent to save.
"What! in my camp my patience would you brave?
"You knew my course towards Augsburg's ramparts lay;
"'Tis fear, not love that prompts you to obey.
"You dread my power—these mean evasions quit,
"These shallow arts, for generous souls unfit.
"Leave these vain hopes, disloyal prince, and know
"Fixed is your punishment, nor slight, nor slow.

LXVII.

"Thy forfeit life the assembled peers demand:
"Little deserv'st thou that my saving hand
"Should snatch thee from the gulf that yawns beneath;
"No, rather should it yield thee to thy death.
"I know thy plots, and all excuse is vain—
"Had these barbarians on this fatal plain
"O'erwhelmed my Franks, and laid my banners low,
"Thou wouldst have shared the triumphs of the foe;
"Then would thy halls have echoed Theudon's fame...
"Less was thy courage, but thy guilt the same.

LXVIII.

"Thank thou thy consort's tears; they better speak
"For mercy, than excuses base and weak.
"But thou—no more within my precincts come,
"But hide thy shame and jealous hate at home.
"Omfroi, thy faith the better to maintain,
"Shall guard thy ramparts with his loyal train.
"Knight, peer of France, and vassal—'twas thy care
"Before myself to meet the Saxon war.
"I pardon now—no future grace expect—(8)
"Hence—and at home on Theudon's fate reflect."

LXIX.

He spoke, and from the traitor turn'd his glance.
Helvetia's warriors at his word advance:
Towards Augsburg's ramparts march the chosen bands,
Whom Omfroi, famed for loyalty, commands.
Thus with triumphant banners Charles proceeds
From conquered Germany to Latium's meads.
Upon his steps his brave companions haste,
Till wild Hercynia's deep defiles are past.
Onward they speed, and soon advancing gain
Constance's lake, and Montfort's fertile plain.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XVIII.

FROM THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH DAY TILL THE NIGHT OF THE EIGHTIETH.

Translated by Dr. Butler.

ARGUMENT.

Complaint of the poet. Misfortunes of Laurentia at Bordeaux. Purgatory.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XVIII.

I.

WHAT storm has swept the lyre since late I sung,(1)
Its notes disordered, and its chords unstrung?
No more, alas, my generous ardour glows!
Midst Tusculum's loved hills, and soft repose;
There, as I strayed, the classic scene around
Breathed inspiration from its hallowed ground.
There, seen at distance from the verdant head,
Rome's mighty walls in wide expanse were spread;
There, as the dawn first streaked the redd'ning skies,
I loved to muse, and watch the day-star rise:
Then on the sacred dome of Christ would gaze,
When first it glittered in the orient rays.

II.

There, if by war or slander's blast assailed,
My brighter genius sank, in darkness veiled,
And left the horizon round involved in gloom,
I sought new guidance at the apostles' tomb.
And oft the august memorial I surveyed,
By Rome to Charles in grateful record paid, (2)
His sculptured form; oft also at the knees
Of him who holds Saint Peter's mystic keys,
I felt a brighter inspiration shine,
Fed by the radiance of his looks divine.

III.

Prince, pontiff, loved of heaven, O Clermont, say, (3)
What filial duty shall thy cares repay?
Even on the shores that skirt the western main,
Still shall this heart its loyal faith maintain.
My precious freight confiding to the deep,
Children and wife, I left Frascati's steep,
And asked a short retreat, I sought no more,
But vainly sought it, on a hostile shore.
Thence by refusal stern and harsh repelled,(4)
O'er the wide watery waste my course I held,
In sufferings oft, and oft in perils cast,
Till Malta's port received our ships at last.

IV.

Here sad captivity's dull weight I find;
Nought pleases here, nought soothes my listless mind;
Nought here can bid my sickening heart rejoice,
Speak to my soul, or animate my voice.
Run to my knees, my children, cherished wife,
Come, softest charm and solace of my life:
One look from thee shall all my peace restore;
Where beams thy smile the desert is no more.
Hence restless memory, hence repinings vain—
On Afric's rock I seize my lyre again.

V.

The passions of his ardent mind to rule,
To prize the friend, and scorn the flattering tool,
From errors owned to bid amendment spring—
These are the triumphs of a Christian king.
These Charles would reap, yet did some secret pain
The noble efforts of his soul restrain.
His brother's widowed wife and infant heirs,
Suspected objects of distrust and cares,
With favouring gales have reached Provence's coast,
Escaped from Rome and Didier's threatning host.

VI.

Charles sits in Montfort's walls by care oppressed,
Musing on their return with anxious breast.
His courtiers urge him, with pretences vain,
To seize, in self defence, this exil'd train;
Pleading the dangers of uncertain times,
And state necessity, the nurse of crimes.
One generous soul, divided from the throng,
Isolier, Cirnos' chief, forbids the wrong;
Recalls his wavering prince to juster laws,
And guards Laurentia's and her children's cause.

VII.

Charles in Isolier loves this fearless part,
His honest words repeating in his heart.
"These hands, that should a brother's children aid,
"Shall these their just inheritance invade?
"This, not the monarch, but the tyrant, shows.
"When Pepin's days were verging to their close,
"Ere yet our aged sire in peace could die,
"On us he fixed his glazed and languid eye,
"Our oaths of lasting amity received,
"And what he fondly hoped, in death believed;
"How shortly, since I pressed a brother's hand,
"His sons are strangers in their native land!

VIII.

"If not with arms, forgetful of my vows,
"I tore the crown at Soissons from their brows,(5)
"Yet none can heaven, himself can none deceive:
"'Twas mine in peace their ruin to achieve.
"Won by my favours, Aquitania's lords
"To me transferred their homage and their swords;
"I then should have disdained the general voice,
"Nor yielded even to their unbiassed choice.
"When treachery midst a faithless people springs,
"The shrine of honour is the heart of kings.

IX.

"Too much by false, ungenerous interest swayed,
"I left my nephews to a stranger's aid.
"Now has the sea, propitious to my prayer,
"Restored these orphans to my guardian care.
"Counsels of selfish policy in vain
"Bid me their sceptre for my sons retain.
"Never, ah never, shall their sire's disgrace
"Stain with a tyrant's guilt his unborn race. (6)
"If Heaven should grant me children, let them shine
"In warlike deeds, illustrious as their line:
"Win glorious realms from pagan princes slain,
"And fill with thriving states the desert plain.

X.

"Heaven's self, approving, will their standards guide;
"For distant hopes 'tis folly to provide.
"Just be we now, the Church and France to spare,
"And quench the smothered flames of civil war.
"Place we our nephews on their father's throne,
"Just to his sons,—to heaven we leave our own.
"'Tis ours to cleanse the soul from vice and crime,
"Not seek to pierce the dark abyss of time.
"To shun unjust ambition be our care,
"And, freed from guilt, to breathe a purer air."

XI.

As one who long in bondage hard has lain,
And groaned beneath the stern oppressor's chain,
Sudden, delivered from his hated lord,
Feels strength renewed, and life and joy restored.
Of long captivity he thinks no more,
And nature's self has charms unknown before:
Fair liberty enchants the smiling scene,
Paints a new world, and vales of brighter green:
Shakes from his breast the weary load of pain,
And kindles life's expiring torch again.

XII.

Thus Charles, within himself content and calm,
Felt o'er his soul diffused a heavenly balm.
Unbent appear'd his brows, his aspect bright,
And sparkled from his eyes a purer light.
While thus his brave companions he addressed:
"Learn, gallant friends, the triumphs of my breast.
"Worthy of virtuous Pepin, Pepin's son
"This day the victory o'er himself has won;
"Your prince the orphan's heritage shall spare,
"And give a brother's sons a brother's care.

XIII.

"My loved, lost brother's friend, approach; be pressed,
"Noble Isolier, to thy prince's breast.
"Model of honour, be the duty thine
"To execute thy prince's just design.
"To Mainfroi's court, Provence's borders, haste,
"Tell him his cherished exiles' woes are past.
"To Milan speed them, and Austrasia's throne
"Siagre, Pepin, for its lords shall own.
"A brother's right and sceptre to his heirs
"We yield, and Carloman's domain is theirs."

XIV.

This gracious speech the noble warrior cheers;
Then first his manly cheeks were wet with tears.
His brave companions, with amazement mute,
Behold an empire shared without dispute,
Shared by a conquering prince; yet each admires
The justice which their generous chief inspires.
Each, by the monarch's bright example moved,
Now thinks with shame on what he late approved.
Where is the greatness of the mightiest kings
When conscience, on the throne of glory, stings?

XIV.

Isolier flies, the grateful news to bear
Quick to Provence, nor finds Laurentia there.
The Mussulman's last triumph to complete,
Herself and sons have left their loved retreat.
Irmensul's arts their firmness have subdued,
And won them to the throne, from solitude.
A frantic people's voice conspires to aid
The wily plots by crafty Longin laid.
The realm of Charles impatient to divide,
And swell the waves of faction's maddening tide;
The Moor, intestine cause of feuds to found,
Siagre, Pepin, has at Bordeaux crowned.

XVI.

Yet, still obtruding in her happiest hours,
Some restless care Laurentia's soul devours.
Thus, darting through the storm, a feeble ray
But shows the horrors of the dreary way.
The hapless queen, amidst encircling foes,
ut views around her Aquitania's woes.
In late regrets her transient joys subside;
She sees her sons with infidels allied:
No kings, but captives, on a throne their shame,
The Church and France insulted in their name.

XVII.

She knows the Mussulman's assembled host
That wait, two myriads strong, on Cetia's coast.
The exarch and Marsilius catch the breeze,
Eager, towards Ostia's port, to cross the seas,
Already on the wave their course they hold.
Theodebert and Gaiffre, traitors bold,
A guardian's rights in Aquitania claim,
And rule despotic in her children's name.
Each wades through blood, his impious power to save,
His country's tyrant, and Almanzor's slave.

XVIII.

The fierce Irmensul viewed his fatal reign
Prolonged by these o'er drooping Aquitain.
When sudden, as he darts a distant glance,
Piercing the vast profound of Heaven's expanse,
He sees in Piedmont, at the mountain's base,
The royal conqueror. "What! in two months space,"
He cries, "does Charles, from Germany o'ercome,
"Now lead his armies, flushed with spoil, to Rome?
"Mine be the task his rapid course to stay,
"Check his high hopes, and turn him on his way.
"Vain is the aid which Charles to Rome would bring:
"France shall recall her armies and her king.

XIX.

"Soon shall he learn from me Austrasia's hate.
"His nephews' wrongs have touched his heart too late.
"If his the North, 'tis here Irmensul reigns,
"His kinsmen here but govern in my chains.
"My hand the gates of discord shall unbar,
"And loose the furies of intestine war.
"Dangers and toils shall here await him still,
"If but my slaves my dark designs fulfil.
"And doomed to vengeance, Adrian's hated towers
"Shall fall 'neath gallant Rodmir's marshalled powers."

XX.

Borne on the northern blast, Irmensul dread
Quits the protentous shades that veil his head;
Swift as the meteor's glare he speeds his flight,
And strikes, with lightning's force, on Adul's height.(7)
Then deigns, transformed, Alphonso's shape to bear,
Asturia's youthful prince, Pelagius' heir.
And soon, with troubled brows, through Charles's tents,
He spreads disastrous news of strange events.
And, in the royal presence, thus relates
The league and progress of the hostile states.

XXI.

"Haste, haste, my liege, to succour Aquitain;
"By countless Saracens thy troops are slain.
"Their lands Theodebert and Gaiffre yield,
"Narbonne's defence holds Monclar from the field.
"The sons of Carloman, at Bordeaux crowned,
"Kindling the sudden flames of war around,
"Have roused their vassals; from Almanzor's hands
"They hold the sceptre of their father's lands.
"The savage Moor his lawless power extends,
"And, in their name, he dooms to death thy friends.

XXII.

"Breathing but death and vengeance on her foes,
"Old Mainfroi's daughter quits her long repose.
"They say that in Provence since her return
"Rebellion's fires, though yet in secret, burn.
"'Neath the false semblance of a soul resigned,
"This artful queen, to Didier's plot inclined,
"Feigning meanwhile his hostile power to dread,
"At length to France from Tiber's shores has fled.
"And with her children crossed the sea, to gain
"Her frontier station near the coasts of Spain.

XXIII.

"Her rights, her presence, and pretensions bold,
"Thy subjects' hearts in foul rebellion hold.
"Her rapid progress is each day more sure,
"Stronger each day the formidable Moor.
"Even to the Atlantic borders from the Rhone
"Thy nephews' power the misled nations own.
"Offering to these the homage of their land,
"Thee with a base usurper's name they brand.
"Thy scattered troops, or captive, or o'erthrown,
"Deep in the fierce Cantabrian's dungeons groan.

XXIV.

"The Huns and Saxons have received thy yoke,
"And Neustria's league thy conquering sword has broke.
"More urgent danger now thy care demands;
"Austrasia homeward calls thy conquering bands.
"Haste to her aid, and let those traitors feel
"The stern, but righteous vengeance of thy steel.
"In Narbonne yet ten thousand troops obey
"The gallant Monclar, and confess thy sway.
"The honour of thy crown defend they there:
"The Moors already for the siege prepare.
"And should'st thou, sire, to distant exploits lead,
"Beneath their impious yoke thy friends must bleed."

XXV.

Touched by the false recital to the heart,
Charles, like a day-dream, feels his hopes depart.
"In duty's path I thought my peace restored,"
He cries, "and now Laurentia bares the sword.
"For long offences this reward is sent:
"Foul was the guilt, and just the punishment.
"My orphan nephews, by these kindred hands
"Spoiled of their just hereditary lands,
"With infidels and traitors are allied.
"Which way my doubtful banners shall I guide?
"Rome may, without our timely aid, be lost,
"Or France be ravaged by the Moorish host."

XXVI.

Oft midst the waves, by adverse currents torn,
On Ocean's breast the fragile bark is borne.
With furious blasts that from the North arise,
Blasts from the raging South dispute the skies.
They raise the waves, and with resistless force
By turns direct the fear-fraught vessel's course.
Now to Rome's succour, now to France inclined,
By turns thus floated Charles's restless mind.
Night in her peaceful shades hath veiled the pole,
Yet brought no peace to his disordered soul.

XXVII.

Before his tent, in darkness and alone,
He muses, anxious, on his course unknown.
Portentous clouds on all his prospects lower,
His cares redoubling with the passing hour.
But prayer at length, that gentle knot which ties
This frail sojourn of mortals with the skies,
Its healing aid to Pepin's offspring lends;
In fervent prayer to Heaven his heart ascends.
"God, Lord of battles! God, thou source of light!
"O guide this day thy servant's sword aright!

XXVIII.

"This day I stand by foes encompassed round;
"O, by thy guidance, be deliverance found!
"Bless thou the path thy soldier's feet would tread.
"If, in obedience to thy precepts dread,
"I broke of late the tenderest, fondest ties,
"And brought my heart, a bleeding sacrifice;
"Have sought my will, submissive, to control,
"And checked the lust of empire in my soul,
"O deign this day thy servant's prayer to hear,
"And let some token of thy grace appear!
"Vouchsafe to manifest thy power divine,
"And let these eyes confess thee in the sign!"

XXIX.

He spoke; and lo, from Adul's cloud-capt height,
In thousand flashes darts the vivid light.
And southward, high in heaven, he sees displayed
A cross of fire upon a cloud of shade.
Shot from the radiant sign, unnumbered beams,
Still southward pointing, dart their countless streams:
O'er the dark forests spread their mingled floods,
And seem to fire the mountains and their woods.
The vales beneath, the plains, and wide spread lakes,
At midnight's hour a noon-tide blaze awakes.

XXX.

Charles, when this gracious sign vouchsafed he sees,
With fervent reverence bends to Heaven his knees.
"Yes, by that sign august and sacred led,
"In Pepin's glorious footsteps Charles shall tread.
"These rays, imparted from the source of light,
"Shall point my course, and guide my steps aright.
"On to the holy city's aid I go,
"Fixed 'neath her walls to meet the Lombard foe.
"May God's right arm protect my realms, and spare
"The guilty horrors of fraternal war."

XXXI.

Geilon of Neustria, summoned at the word,
Receives the gracious mandates of his lord.
Charles in his prudence trusts, with wary hands,
To curb Almanzor and the traitor bands;
The wily plots of Gaiffre to o'erthrow,
And check the progress of the Moorish foe;
Bid troubled Aquitain's commotions cease,
And give his nephews and their vassals peace.
Commissioned thus, the Neustrian chief departs
For Bordeaux' walls: he hopes by gentle arts
A brave misguided people to reclaim,
And, ere it blaze, to quench rebellion's flame.

XXXII.

While the sage minister of peace proceeds
From Adul's summits toward Austrasia's meads,
An impious yoke abused Laurentia bears,
And views, discovered, all Irmensul's snares.
Each day in Bordeaux aggravates her pain,
And binds the Christians in a heavier chain.
Vainly they seek the throne with suppliant prayer;
The Moorish tyrant rules resistless there:
Tramples their rights with jealous fury down,
And leaves their princes but a pageant crown.

XXXIII.

His thirst of slaughter he no more conceals,
And boldly all his impious plots reveals.
The kings were slaves, a stranger's rude command
Oppressed themselves, their people, and their land.
The palace walls a ruthless master own,
Issuing his haughty mandates to the throne.
His slightest word Laurentia's will confounds,
She blushes for a crown which guilt surrounds;
Thinks on her children's wrongs with bitterest pain,
And wishes for her exiled state again.

XXXIV.

The wants and sorrows in that exile known
Are joy, compared to this degraded throne.
She hopes to 'scape its impious pomp in vain,
Silence and terror only round her reign.
The Moor his captives guards with watchful eyes,
And all access to pitying friends denies.
His jealous care forbids a word or look,
And sad Laurentia lives of all forsook.
Her gloomy days in changeless tenor flow,
Yet from her children she conceals her woe.

XXXV.

But when at night in soft repose they lay,
Tired with the childish pastimes of the day,
The wretched mother unrestrained would weep,
And give to ceaseless tears the hours of sleep:
And, as beside their couch she watched, would own
The bitter pomps of a delusive throne.
The Roman pontiff's last adieux she hears,
His solemn voice still vibrates on her ears:
Still o'er her sense his parting accents roll,
And waken late repentance in her soul.

XXXVI.

High from the palace of Austrasia's kings
A gorgeous dome to Heaven ascending springs.

A hallowed spot, the sacred altar there
Oft witnessed Carloman's domestic prayer.
Here does Laurentia bear her nightly woes,
Stranger to sleep, to comfort, or repose.
The Virgin Mother here, divinely mild,
Folds to her bosom her celestial child.
A radiant beam surrounds her sainted head,
Shot through the vault, and round the altar shed.
The sacred image as Laurentia views,
A soothing calm her restless fear subdues.
With hopes revived, she views the gentle face
That speaks the mother of the Christian race.

XXXVII.

Bent on her knees before the sacred shrine,
She prays the immortal Virgin's aid divine.
Then ventures on the sculptured form to gaze,
Round whose bright head the radiant nimbus plays.
That gracious smile, which nought but Heaven could own,
That brow serene, celestial mercy's throne,
Where peace, and tenderness, and mildness dwell,
Bid her wrapt heart with warmer transports swell.
Lost in the musing of her sacred trance,
Ecstatic visions o'er her sense advance,
As, gazing still, she feels her sorrows cease,
And her soul drinks unutterable peace.

XXXVIII.

A soft perfume is round the altar spread,
From fragrant myrrh and holy incense shed.
Wide through the dome celestial concords swell,
The lyre, the voice, and harp of Israel.
A blushing light, as of the rising day,
Glows through the vault with mild but vermeil ray;
Streams o'er the shrine, and stronger as it grows,
The best protectress of the wretched shows,
The Virgin Mother; while the heavenly band,
In radiant circle ranged, around her stand.

XXXIX.

The dazzling lilies that surround her brow,
Her love for France, and for its people, show.(8)
"Relict of Carloman, behold," she cries;
"I hear thy prayers, thy sorrows, and thy sighs.
"Heaven to thy tears forgiveness hath restored,
"Now follow me to thy departed lord;
"Pierce through the sepulchre's unfathomed gloom,
"And view the awful secrets of the tomb.
"Be to my guidance grateful and resigned,
"Rally thy zeal, and fortify thy mind;
"Haste, to my voice obedient, haste, and fly
"The abhorred of Heaven, the foes of the Most High."

XL.

These gentle accents soothe Laurentia's woes,
And softly charm her sorrows to repose.
She feels unfettered from all mortal ties,
And wakes to new and daring ecstasies.
Prostrate before her guide and heavenly friend,
Her dazzled eyes in lowly reverence bend.
Lost to her view, the world appears to fade,
Now seems she by some unknown power conveyed,
Midst those refulgent orbs a path to trace,
Spread by the eternal Word through boundless space.

XLI.

Following the guidance of the angelic host,
Full soon those orbs are to her vision lost.
The flaming bounds that circle Heaven are past,
And ancient Chaos' verge she gains at last.
There to her sight a barren mountain stands,
Fixed on these confines by Almighty hands.
Atlas on Alps, on Atlas Hæmus hurled, (9)
Were but a hillock to this mountain world.
Smoke from its reeking base incessant rose,
Fire down its sides in mazy torrents flows:
Heaven's own right hand first lit the flaming waves,
And poured the fiery surge through countless caves.

XLII.

But, from the base ascending to the height,
Less glow the bickering flames with angry light,
Till, on the midway rock's encircling sides,
In dying waves the parted flame divides.
So from heaven's throne commands the Almighty Lord,
And seas, and earth, and fire, obey his word:
Though on this rock profoundest darkness reigns,
Here cease at least the fire's devouring pains:
And round the mountain's loftiest cliffs are seen,
Gilding its brows, the beams of light serene.

XLIII.

Now towards her guide Laurentia turns her eyes;
"What scenes of wonder to my sense arise!
"What mean those fiery floods, that darkness drear,
"This mountain's base, that chills my soul with fear?
"Whence to mine ears in sad confusion flow
"Deep groans, and sobs, and wails, and shrieks of woe?
"What are those rays which gild its loftiest height,
"More mild and lovely than the star of night,
"When through the azure vault she glides in peace,
"Serene, and bids our cares and sorrows cease?"

XLIV.

"Child of Martel," her virgin guide replies;
"No common scene of wonders strikes thine eyes:
"Thou see'st the secrets of that mount unknown,
"Whose purging fires for human guilt atone.
"Its base beneath the abyss of chaos tends,
"To heaven's own walls its towering height ascends:
"Flames fierce, yet transient, issue from the base,
"That light which charms thee from the holy place;
"These rays of hope and blessedness impart
"Some gleams of comfort to the exile's heart,
"Lighten his sorrows, and console his fears,
"Midst his sad passage through this mount of tears.

XLV.

"Canst thou yon shades upon the heights descry,
"That drink the beam divine with raptured eye?
"No pains devour, no flames torment them now,
"Save that their breasts with heavenly transports glow.
"These in the fiery gulf have purged their stains,
"Have passed the midway rock where darkness reigns;
"Gained, step by step, these lucid heights, and wait
"Their prompt admission at the heavenly gate;
"There shall the raptured host their Lord adore,
"And feel no suffering care or sorrow more.

XLVI.

"The scattered shades that in yon valleys stray,
"Where night divided empire holds with day,
"Must through deep sufferings in long exile go.
"He, whose sad attitude denotes his woe,
"Fixing on earth his hopeless, tear-fraught look,
"Weeps o'er the virtues which his son forsook.
"That son, in tangled error's thorny wild,
"From virtue's path to crimes and vice beguiled,
"Has from his God with heart rebellious strayed,
"And slights, with rude contempt, his father's shade.

XLVII.

"Following a vain chimera, pleasure's slave,
"The wrath of heaven he madly dares to brave.
"No alms are paid, no masses sung, to gain
"Speedier deliverance of his father's pain:
"Hopeless of these, abandoned of his own,
"Does the wronged shade in lengthened sufferings groan:
"He feels his children's guilt with keenest smart,
"Who thought to live for ever in their heart:
"Madly they rushed down error's headlong steep,
"And Heaven permits their sire in vain to weep.

XLVIII.

"Too well foresees he the consuming pains
"Which heavenly justice for his sons ordains.
"As on the fatal brink his offspring stands,
"Vainly the father bends his powerless hands,
"From his dark prison-house to earth outspread;
"Vainly he sighs, with fond paternal dread:
"Ne'er shall those sighs arrest his children's ear,
"And wake their heart to penitence sincere;
"The unfathomed void of trackless space receives
"The fruitless sighs the suffering mourner heaves.

XLIX.

"A slender form ascends on buoyant wings,
"And towards the realms of peace eternal springs.
"Raise, daughter, raise thine eyes; they once have seen
"That shade, in Orleans' walls a blooming queen—
"A prince's consort, lovely, fair, and young;
"But busy flatterers, with deceitful tongue,
"Their secret poison to her heart applied,
"And swelled her soul with luxury and pride,
"Tainting her virtues with envenomed power;
"Death in her prime out off this lovely flower.

L.

"An age in exile she was doomed to sigh:
"Such was the sentence registered on high,
"When first her spirit left its mortal frame.
"Her husband loved her with a generous flame:
"In virtue's path he passed his early years,
"And mourned his consort's fate with tenderest tears.
"Heaven marked the sorrows of the royal youth,
"His vows, his tears, his constancy and truth;
"And now, indulgent to his virtuous love,
"Admits her to the glorious seats above."

LI.

Laurentia recognised the blissful shade;
A heavenly brightness o'er her features played:
Her spotless brow with blooming flowers was drest;
A nuptial veil, and glittering heavenly vest,
Enhanced those graces they concealed from view;
As, like a star, on radiant wing she flew,
Borne to those heavenly heights, while all around
Angelic harps and choral voices sound.
Old Chaos heaves, and from the gulfs of Hell,
With baffled rage, despairing demons yell.

LII.

This blissful shade, that owed to heavenly love
Her summons to the glorious seats above,
With deep regrets o'erwhelmed Austrasia's queen.
"If Carloman, 'mid this disastrous scene,
"For human guilt and frailties must atone,
"Ah, what have I, his wretched widow, done,
"To ease his sufferings and assuage his pain?
"O thou, to whom no mourner pleads in vain;
"O, gentle mother of the unhappy, tell,
"Does my loved lord amid these horrors dwell?
"Thither his weeping widowed consort bear,
"And grant, in mercy grant, my fervent prayer."

LIII.

She spoke, and lo, beneath the dazzling height,
The host angelic slowly cease their flight.
The countless tribes, that fill this mount of tears,
Exult, as Heaven's benignant Queen appears.
With hope and love, unfelt before, they burn,
And joy to celebrate her blest return:
For hither oft, by mercy led, she goes,
And her blest presence soothes their sharpest woes:
Round her the gathering shades unnumbered press,
Her aid imploring to relieve and bless.

LIV.

From rock to rock, from vale to vale profound,
On thousand echoes borne, Hosannas sound.
No sadness more this land of exile knows,
And, shot from heaven, a brighter splendour glows.
Then thought Laurentia she beheld her lord,
Dear to her soul, and even in death adored.
Upon a lonely rock, sublime and vast,
Sat Carloman, with look to earth down cast:
As one o'erwhelmed with care he bowed his head,
And bent his ample brows, with dust o'erspread.

LV.

"Carloman! spouse adored!" she would have cried;
But on her lips the faltering accents died.
With soft emotions is her heart possest,
And her soul faints within her heaving breast.
Lost in amaze, the grandson of Martel
Beholds those features known and loved so well.
"O God," he cries, "thy mercies O complete,
"Let not a shadowy dream my senses cheat,
"Or let the sweet enchantment ne'er depart;
"And thou, the dearest treasure of my heart,
"Erst my life's charm, my sorrowing soul's relief,
"Let thy soft voice beguile me of my grief."

LVI.

Fondly the shadowy form Laurentia pressed
(And thought it substance) to her ardent breast.
"I feel," she cries, "new strength my bosom fill,
"Bravely to bear the worst attacks of ill:
"Still does thy heart our cherished love retain,
"And, as in life, I clasp my lord again.
"Death cannot love so chaste as ours divide;
"Again I hold thee, my support and guide:
"When reft of thee, my sure protecting light,
"Ah, have I steered my dubious course aright?

LVII.

"O, have I erred, if, yielding to the voice
"Of friendly princes and a nation's choice,
"I gave my sons to rule Austrasia's land,
"And placed their father's sceptre in their hand?
"Does not just Heaven the orphan's cause protect?
"O, let thy voice my wandering soul direct.
"But thou! what may that garb of mourning mean?
"Upon thy troubled brow that dust unclean?
"Is there no comfort here; or must thou go
"Through all the sad variety of woe?"

LVIII.

Deep from his breast he heaves a mournful sigh,
And views his widowed queen with tearful eye.
"O day," he cries, "of happiness and woe!
"Know'st thou not whence these tears, Laurentia, flow?
"What, while our sons beneath a tyrant bend,
"Helpless their Church, their country to defend,
"While in their name the Moor bids thousands bleed,
"Still canst thou marvel whence my cares proceed?
"For thee and for thy sons each hour I dread
"Heaven's wrath, in thunder bursting o'er thy head.

LIX.

"What other pains I feel I need not tell:
"This exile is deserved, alas, too well!
"Resigned I bow to heaven's all just decree,
"And humbly wait the hour that sets me free.
"Intoxicate with pride, ambition's slave,
"I spurned the advice a dying father gave.
"By hostile swords, on Aquitania's plain,
"I basely left my brother to be slain. (10)
"His virtues, triumphs, and deserved renown,
"Had dimmed the lustre of my meaner crown:
"His merits all the world's attention drew,
"And hatred in my rankling bosom grew.

LX.

"Reft of my aid, with perils compassed round,
"Unknown resources in himself he found;
"And bowed the rebel province to his will:
"Then swelled my heart with deadlier envy still.
"Forgetful of my fame and of my throne,
"With jealous anguish inly would I groan,
"To secret discontent a gloomy prey.
"Well thou rememberest that disgraceful day,
"When far from thee in woods I sought to rove,
"And seemed alike unmoved by fame or love.

LXI.

"This sin was in yon fiery gulfs atoned,
"There, but for thee, still haply had I groaned.
"That love on earth which cheered my hours of gloom,
"Has lent its succouring aid beyond the tomb.
"Thy tears, thy virtues, and thy vows could gain
"Even here remittance of my sharpest pain,
"And soothe the worst extremity of ill;
"But thou wast then resigned to Heaven's high will.
"As mother, widow, Christian, faithful found,
"To my soul's ease did all thy works abound.

LXII.

"For oft we view, from this sojourn of woe,
"Our wandering families on earth below.
"Their worth, if still they walk with Christian zeal,
"To us imputed, can our sufferings heal.
"Thus does the Almighty bind with tenderest chains (11)
"To earth's inhabitants our joys or pains.
"If in the paths of guilt our kindred stray,
"We seek with tears to wash their crime away;
"Their virtues can the wrath of Heaven appease,
"Abridge our pain, and give our torments ease.

LXIII.

"Leagued when I saw thee with an impious foe,
"My soul essayed the bitterness of woe:
"Haply to save thee from that fatal reef,
"I bear these rent habiliments of grief.
"At Heaven's high throne with ceaseless prayer I bend—
"That prayer is heard—and all our woes shall end.
"From Bordeaux's walls, Laurentia, thou must fly!
"Arm thy weak heart with fearless constancy:
"Night lends thee still her dark and friendly veil,
"Fly with our sons, ere friendly darkness fail.
"Fly from these walls, with crime and guilt oppress;
"Fly! and to God's own mercy leave the rest.

LXIV.

"Thine aged father summons thee to Nice;
"There shall thy wanderings and thy sorrows cease.
"Nor fear what fortune shall our sons betide,
"With thee their days secure in peace shall glide.
"Charles sees his errors, and has burst their chain,
"And now that sceptre loathes of Aquitain,
"Which from his nephews erst he dared to wrest,
"Too heavy for his hands, a weight unblest.
"He bends his lofty soul to virtue's laws,
"And views with favouring eyes his nephews' cause.

LXV.

"They might upon their father's throne be placed;
"But when their brows with sacred oil were graced,
"Their hearts to God did holy Adrian vow.
"The pomps of courts, O never may they know!
"The pastoral mitre shall their head surround; (12)
"Their names in golden characters are found
"Writ in the book of life; one prince to reign
"O'er undivided France does Heaven ordain:
"That thus, triumphant o'er her impious foe,
"The Church her peace may to our offspring owe.

LXVI.

"Bow then, to Heaven's all righteous will resigned;
"From this world's idle pageants wean thy mind.
"Alas! how fades the pomp of kingly pride,
"When death approaching draws the veil aside,
"And shows the truth! how heavy is a crown!
"Its weight yet bows my aching temples down.
"O let my race for ever quit the throne,
"And live to courts and palaces unknown:
"By no remorse for past misdeeds opprest,
"And feel the sunshine of a guiltless breast.

LXVII.

"These counsels firmly treasure in thy heart,
"These parting words, for we must quickly part.
"Those fatal vapours from the mount that rise,
"Hide thy loved form already from mine eyes.
"Farewell! thy prayers and piety sincere
"May work deliverance for thy husband here;
"May change thy children's lot: death thou must brave,
"Thy country from fraternal war to save.
"Dear, loved Laurentia! these last words receive;
"A throne degraded must thy children leave:
"Let them with thee those rebel ramparts fly,
"And live like Christians, or like martyrs die!"

LXVIII.

Thus while he spoke a sable cloud appears,
And shades, with far spread gloom, the vale of tears.
Towards Carloman it mounts, and wraps around
The darkened summits in its veil profound.
A sullen murmur speaks the tempest near,
Quick roll the stars, and vanish in their sphere.
The guardian Virgin, and celestial train,
With lightning's speed to Heaven ascend again.
And as Laurentia bends her trembling knees,
Nought but her own domestic shrine she sees.

ARGUMENT.

Flight of Laurentia through the Landes. The ruined hermitage. The mysterious apparition. The Chatelain de Sere.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XIX.

I.

PLACED on the altar, near the Virgin's feet,
Laurentia's view some unknown garments meet.
The hand unseen, which this attire had brought,
Domestic cloth with modest serge had wrought.
"Ah, for my children, for myself," she cries,
"What treasure holds this coarse and mean disguise!
"This garb, for mine, for their deliverance sent,
"Heaven's purpose manifests; I bow content.
"My bosom beats with hope, with raptures high;
"Yes, Carloman, I hear thee yet, and fly."

II.

She spoke; and soon regained the lone retreat
Where slept her children, locked in slumber sweet:
Wept o'er their couch, unconscious as they lay,
And mused upon the peril of their way.
Friendless, with these at midnight must she go,
Through unknown paths, since Heaven ordains it so;
For who within these gloomy walls will aid,
By stern Almanzor's vengeance undismayed?
No Christians here, no pitying friends are found,
But all are foes, or jealous guards around.
Exile and death unsuccoured must she brave,
Her orphan sons from impious power to save.

III.

Now, as she bends to fold them to her breast,
Her soft embrace disturbed their tranquil rest.
Quick from their roseate brows and opened eyes
The paleness of their placid slumber flies.
They thought again returned the welcome day,
That calls and lights them to their boyish play;
And duly, as at morn's accustomed hour,
Their hands they raise to Heaven's protecting power.
With rival smiles their anxious mother greet,
And fond caress with fond caresses meet.

IV.

Her falling tears Siagre's cheek bedewed,
With eager gaze Laurentia's eyes he viewed,
With ill-feigned courage as she turned aside,
And sought in vain a mother's fear to hide.
"O mother! say what ills are yet in store,
"From rebel subjects, or the tyrant Moor?
"What can they worse, that thus beside our bed,
"While yet night's shadows o'er the world are spread,
"Watching, thou bid'st us from our slumbers rise,
"Ere the first welcome sun-beams strike our eyes?"

V.

"My sons," she cries, "what thanks to Heaven you
owe,
"From Heaven's protecting care what mercies flow!
"Rise, quickly let us fly these walls abhorred,
"Where reigns the foe of Heaven's Eternal Lord.
"Haste, fearless haste, by my example led,
"And in your mother's footsteps boldly tread.
"Soon may we hope a safe retreat to find,
"To innocence like yours by Heaven assigned.
"Night, and your father's gift, this coarse disguise,
"Shall shield his victims from the tyrant's eyes."

VI.

'Neath coarse wrought cloth, while thus she spoke, with care
She hides the ringlets of their flaxen hair.
Their woollen coat a cincture girds of felt, (1)
An iron buckle holds the simple belt.
Laurentia wears a homely peasant's gown,
Her mantle's artless folds hang loosely down;
These o'er her bosom gathered hide the grace
That beams resplendent from her beauteous face;
And Pepin's grandsons, Mainfroi's daughter wear
The lowly garb which humble labourers bear.

VII.

Then as it sparkled from their brows unbound,
She seized the regal fillets glittering round.
"O false delusive ornaments," she cries,
"Sad source whence all my woes and errors rise:
"Haste, children, haste, and to the Virgin's hands
"Yourselves commit these fatal, guilty bands.
"Called at the altars of your God to wait,
"Quit these vain pageantries of earthly state;
"Let nobler hopes your heavenly thoughts employ,
"And wake to transports of celestial joy.
"Forsake this hollow pomp, this gaudy show,
"And dry the source whence all my sorrows flow."

VIII.

She spoke, and leads them to the sacred shrine,
Warmed with new zeal, and filled with strength divine.
There, at the Virgin's feet they knelt, and placed
The glittering bands which had their temples graced,
Gazed on her form, and fancied, as they prayed,
A gracious smile upon her features played.
Her heavenly influence to their soul supplies
A blissful calm that every ill defies.
Circling their mother, down the narrow stair
They win their secret steps with watchful care;
The portal gain, and, urging swift their flight,
Soon lose their father's palace from their sight.

IX.

Night's radiant orb her midway course pursued,
And all around was hushed in solitude:
Through Bordeaux' winding streets Laurentia fled,
And sought the royal gate with cautious tread;
That gate, which bears her consort's honoured name,
Raised by his subjects to their prince's fame.
There, 'midst his court, in regal pomp arrayed,
He sat, while vassal lords their homage paid,
What time he journeyed through his wide domain,
And fixed his royal seat in Aquitain. (2)

X.

These portals rich with varied marbles rise;
Through them the path to wild Iberia lies.
High o'er the trophied arch, with regal mien,
Is Carloman's august resemblance seen;
Above Austrasia's warlike peers he stands,
And breathes in marble from the sculptor's hands.
Laurentia gazes on the form adored,
The dear memorial of her much-loved lord;
And bids his orphans rest awhile, to trace
The well-known features of their father's face;
Then, stifling in her heart her fears and woes,
Beneath the echoing vault she slowly goes.

XI.

Of watchful Saracens an armed train
Their nightly vigil at the gate maintain:
One marks, and crosses with his spear her way;
Back shrink her children, trembling with dismay.
"And who art thou, poor wretch!" the emir cries,
"Thy purpose speak, and where thy errand lies.
"Think'st thou these iron gates will ope to thee
"At midnight's hour, and know'st not the decree,
"Which passage here to none ere morn affords,
"Save Bordeaux' princes and Austrasia's lords!
"Long distant yet thy hour of labour seems;
"'Neath yonder portal wait the morning beams."

XII.

Laurentia, as he spoke, her fears restrains,
And 'neath the trophied arch her station gains.
Here, by a lofty column's base reclined,
She vents the sorrows of her anguished mind.
"—O pray, my children, in this hour of fear,
"Pray, but in silence, lest the foe should hear."
She spoke, and close as at her side they knelt,
By turns a mother's fond embrace they felt.
Pressed to her heart the trembling orphans prayed,
And sought with tears the immortal Virgin's aid.

XIII.

Now towards the gate a warlike host proceeds,
Their clashing shields resound, and trampling steeds.
The shrill-voiced clarions from their brazen throat
Announce the presence of some chief of note.
Redoubled fears Laurentia's bosom fill,
But Heaven is just, and faith supports her still.
"Gaiffre, Theodebert," a voice exclaims;
The ready guard assembles at their names.
The folding gates, with massive iron bound,
Back on their hinges roll with thundering sound.

XIV.

These warrior chiefs pursue their nightly way,
Where flows the Sigman to the Curian bay. (3)
Revenge for recent injuries they plan,
And doom to death the Christians of Bigan.
Within those ramparts, where the cross prevailed,
A band of Saracens was late assailed.
Almanzor scorns on those devoted towers
To wreak his vengeance by the Moorish powers:
He gives the charge to Aquitania's lords
To stain with kindred blood their guilty swords.

XV.

Their vassals to their own defeat they lead;
Laurentia marks the lengthened train recede:
O'er the wide plain a wishful look she throws,
And towards the gates advances ere they close.
What may she dare? Even now she sees the Moor
Turn on its grating hinge the massive door.
Heaven bids new courage in her bosom rise:
"Warrior, permit our passage here!" she cries.
Turned towards the voice the rude barbarian stands,
The fatal bolt suspended in his hands.

XVI.

He stops,—he wavers,—on her children smiles,
With rude, yet kind caress, their fear beguiles:
Vouchsafes his hand upon their heads to lay,
And to the trembling mother opes the way.
This Moor in Guadix' distant walls had left (4)
A wife and infant of his aid bereft.
Laurentia's sons, their form, their youthful air,
Call to his mind those objects of his care.
The fancied likeness pleased him, and he felt
His rugged breast with strange emotions melt.
Thus righteous Heaven, by Gaiffre and a Moor,
Decreed Laurentia's freedom to restore.

XVII.

Through the wild champaign she pursues her flight,
Till Bordeaux' lofty towers were lost to sight.
"Children," she cries, "at length alone we stray,
"But God, the orphan's father, leads our way.
"To God your hands, your hearts united raise,
"Entreat his succour, and his mercy praise.
"Now, doubtless, near him does your father rest,
"Admitted to the mansions of the blest.
"Invoke him now, in the celestial sphere,
"For Carloman his orphans' prayers can hear.
"Know that the perils which our flight attend
"Have made a father's, husband's sufferings end.

XVIII.

She spoke, and joy too great for utterance felt,
As at her side the trembling orphans knelt.
Much she rejoiced to fly those walls abhorred,
True to the voice of her departed lord.
She feels her soul with heavenly peace possest;
Its gentle influence soothes her fears to rest;
Cheers her with comfort midst severe alarms,
With hope inspires, and with composure arms.
What shall she fear? with hands to heaven outspread,
Her daily fervent orisons she said.
In loud response her children's voices rise,
And midnight's echo to their prayer replies.

XIX.

Raised from her knees, Laurentia bends her eye
O'er the wide plains that in the horizon lie.
The star of night yet shed a silver ray
Upon the bleak and melancholy way.
A desert vast of barren sand it showed,
Where once the sea's tumultuous waves had flowed. (5)
No verdure there the ravished eye could cheer,
But all was sterile, desolate, and drear.
The thirsty shepherd flies the burning plain,
The plough would trace its furrows there in vain.

XX.

Some scattered bushes raised their barren head,
O'er the lone waste in thin disorder spread.
Laurentia sees, upon the desert soil,
Her orphan charge already faint with toil.
No friendly shelter meets her anxious eye,
In haste she fled, and knows not where to fly.
She fled those hated walls with guilt oppresst,
And faith and hope still animate her breast.
All doubt subdued, contented to obey,
An unseen hand she trusts will guide her way.

XXI.

This sterile plain, this pale and dubious light
Shed by the wandering planet of the night,
That lonely mountain to her thoughts recalled,
Whose recent terrors had her sense appalled.
But on the rock, projecting huge and bare,
No more sits Carloman absorbed in care.
Doubtless the crown of Heaven's elect ere now
Binds with immortal flowers his radiant brow;
And, mounting towards the eternal throne of light,
Like a new star he wins his glorious flight,
Attracted upwards towards the source of day,
And rolls in ether with unclouded ray.

XXII.

The thought consoled Laurentia's care-worn breast;
With gentlest words her children she addressed,
Their zeal encouraged with maternal love,
And sought their fears and sorrow to remove.
She tells how oft God's power has shone displayed
An infant's wants with gracious care to aid;
Oft in the desert oped his bounteous hand:
How, when the Hebrews fled an impious land,
With thirst and famine faint, a gracious rain
Poured heavenly manna on the sandy plain.

XXIII.

Near Gaza's towers how Abraham's slave of yore
The perils of the waste with Ishmael bore.
She placed her child beneath the desert thorn,
Fainting with thirst, and with despair forlorn.
Parched were his lips, and gasping was his breath,
His sharp-drawn features bore the stamp of death.
The wretched Hagar turns her frantic eye,
And calls on righteous Heaven with suppliant cry.
Heaven sends an angel to the desert wild;
"Rise, Hagar, rise," he calls, "receive thy child.

XXIV.

"Hagar! to Heaven thy fervent prayer was made,
"And Heaven, invoked by fervent prayer, will aid;
"Will clothe with plants the sterile rocks, and bless
"With flowers and fruits the lonely wilderness.
"Here shall thy child increase in strength and grace,
"The mighty founder of a numerous race:
"From Ishmael's loins shall spring the warlike seed.
"Now with thy charge across the plain proceed;
"Soon shall a sacred spring refresh thy toil;
"Mark its green margin on the burning soil."

XXV.

The angel spoke: the joyful mother raised
Her fainting child, and Heaven in transport praised.
The precious burthen lent her strength anew,
And soon the welcome fountain meets her view.
Joy lends her wings the favoured spot to gain,
Whose limpid treasures cheer the thirsty plain.
Her bursting sobs a mother's raptures tell,
Quick as she draws the life-restoring well.
Ishmael revives: she clasps him to her breast;
Joy fills her soul, and lulls her cares to rest.

XXVI.

Thus to her children did Laurentia show,
From gracious Heaven what tender mercies flow.
And as the tale of Abraham's son she told,
Fast down her cheeks the starting tear-drops rolled.
Like Beersheba's wild desert seemed the Lande, (6)
Waste, houseless, drear, uncultivated sand.
No friendly succour, no protecting guide,
To mark her path across the champaign wide.
Now fades the night, and in the horizon low
The first bright streaks that tint the morning glow.

XXVII.

The sun now rises as Aurora flies,
And paints with thousand hues the golden skies;
Drinks the moist vapours with his flaming ray,
And pours from Heaven the blazing floods of day.
Nought but a lonely waste Laurentia sees,
Deserted sands, yet dreads pursuit in these.
No more protected by the shades of night,
The impious foe by day may trace her flight:
To rest her sons, and make that flight secure,
How gladly would she find some cave obscure.

XXVIII.

Vain wish! even now, with faltering steps and slow,
O'er the parched soil the fainting orphans go:
Worn with fatigue beneath the burning ray,
No longer can they speed their toilsome way.
Two shrubs support Laurentia's homely vest;
Beneath its shade her wearied orphans rest.
Now had the sun his noontide height attained,
And in mid heaven with blazing splendour reigned,
When tidings first through Bordeaux' walls were spread,
Of the two princes with Laurentia fled.

XXIX.

Filled is the palace with alarm and gloom;
The Moorish guards receive their instant doom.
His scimetar in hand, in frantic mood
The fierce Almanzor scatters fear and blood:
With furious outcries bids his vassal ssay,
What daring hand has robbed him of his prey.
With proffered gold the offender thinks to find,
Raving with wrath, and with presumption blind.
By wild despair and baffled fury driven,
The tyrant thus blasphemes avenging Heaven.
To glut his rage a hundred Christians bleed,
To death beneath his murderous sword decreed.

XXX.

All those he slaughters whose incautious zeal
Could wake the vengeance of his jealous steel:
All whom his own distrust, or public fame,
As loyal friends of Carloman could name.
Poured o'er the neighbouring plains, the Moorish horse,
With eager search, in numerous squadrons course:
These, sword in hand, the noble wanderers seek,
Whose flight has blanched with fear the tyrant's cheek:
For in his captives' names Almanzor reigned,
And held Austrasia in his yoke enchained.

XXXI.

Gone are the bravest of the Moorish host,
Led by Marsilius to the Latian coast.
Unawed by these, in subject Aquitain,
The people plot revolt, and shake their chain.
Should in the field the grandsons of Martel
Their standard raise, and call them to rebel,
What might their spirit roused to vengeance dare?
These fears o'erwhelmed the tyrant's soul with care.
Laurentia, rescued from this yoke of shame,
Might reign o'er Bordeaux in her children's name.

XXXII.

How could he think, with mad ambition blind,
That throne detested, and that crown resigned?
Remorseless tyrant! who, to guard his own,
Bade the wide world in blood and mourning groan.
Meantime the wretched mother, far away,
Friendless, unaided, to despair a prey,
Revolves the eventful future bathed in tears,
And even her children's slumbers rouse her fears.
Oft in the horizon, to her anxious eyes
Gleam flashing arms, and shouts tumultuous rise.

XXXIII.

Scarce have their eye-lids opened to the light,
Through the mid desert they resume their flight;
And while the tyrant's scattered squadrons march,
Bent on pursuit, through Carloman's proud arch,
Laurentia seeks, ere night's return, to gain
The farther confine of the sandy plain.
O'er the parched soil, beneath the burning ray,
Herself, her orphans, urge their toilsome way:
Sleep had refreshed them, but their fevered tongue,
With thirst, like Ishmael's, to their palate clung.

XXXIV.

Soon must they sink upon the deadly soil,
Fainting for nourishment, and spent with toil.
The trembling mother seeks, ere evening's close,
Some friendly spot for shelter and repose;
Checks, with forced efforts, her foreboding fears,
And with consoling voice her children cheers:
Views, with enquiring eye, the distant sands,
Announcing hamlets, fields, and peopled lands;
And faith o'er fear prevailing as she gazed,
She listens to the hopes herself has raised.

XXXV.

But hope from Pepin and Siagre fled:
With tottering knees, parched lips, and drooping head,
O'er the wide plain they cast their hopeless eyes,
And answer but with tears, complaint, and sighs.
"Soon," cries Laurentia, "soon our woes shall cease,
"Hushed in a long futurity of peace:
"Its charms, my children, soon shall heal our pains,
"Soon shall we quit these wild and burning plains:
"See where beyond them smiles the beauteous scene,
"Trees cool with shade, and fields with verdure green."

XXXVI.

Cheered with fresh hope, a joyful cry they send,
As o'er the plain their eager gaze they bend.
The sailor thus, whom adverse gales have borne
Far from his course, by toils and dangers worn,
If haply from his mast the land he spies,
Where ragged cliffs or naked mountains rise,
If but a harbour for his bark it form,
Dear is the shore to him that dreads the storm;
And pointed rocks, when first his view they meet,
Like some fair town his raptured fancy greet.

XXXVII.

Now fondly thought Laurentia she surveyed
A tower and hamlet in the distant shade.
A sigh she stifles, nearer when she sees
A barren hillock crowned with scattered trees.
Some feeble firs are thinly planted round,
Beside a low enclosure's ruined mound:
A broken treillis still in part is seen,
And the lone garden still with box is green.
The Moor, unsparing in his frantic rage,
Had lately burnt this peaceful hermitage.

XXXVIII.

Yet 'neath this thatch Heaven's minister of yore
Oped to the poor his hospitable store:
His labour wrested from the stubborn soil
Such fruits as cheered the pilgrim faint with toil.
And gently, from the bottom of the hill,
Rose, 'twixt two tufted pines, a crystal rill:
Its stream refreshed the parched and sandy waste:
Two antique vines the treillis interlaced;
A grateful shade their verdant branches lent,
With ripening grapes in purple clusters bent.

XXXIX.

These fruits relieved the orphans' thirsty tongue,
As on the bank their wearied limbs they flung.
Meantime Laurentia climbs the hillock's brow,
And views with eager gaze the plains below.
There, on the horizon's verge, a castle stands,
And frowns embattled on the subject lands.
Shall, in these sheltering walls, her sorrows end?
Hold they a faithful vassal and a friend?
Or does the tyrant Mussulman maintain
Even here the terrors of his impious reign?

XL.

Ere night has wrapt the world in shade profound,
Laurentia yet may reach the castle's mound.
Her journey she resumes, subdues her fear,
And finds at last the towers and portal near.
In silence hushed, the timid orphans wait;
Herself advances, with determined gait,
Towards the large fosse that guards the central keep,
Where o'er the frowning tower the banners sweep.
They bear an eaglet on a field of gold;
A blood-stained fleece his haggard pounces hold.

XLI.

Laurentia sees, and stops in mute despair;
'Tis Gaiffre's standard, royal Clovis' heir.
Scaped from the desert, yet she flies in vain,
The towers of Gaiffre own Almanzor's reign.
Far, far from these, the wanderer must depart:
Toil wastes her strength, and grief consumes her heart.
With sorrow spent, and with fatigue oppress,
Yet farther must she find some place of rest.
Then slowly towards a straw-roofed shed she goes,
There for the night seeks shelter and repose.

XLII.

Clad in a flowing veil of purest white,
A modest virgin meets her wondering sight:
Roses with lilies blended bind her head;
Her beaming eyes celestial mildness shed.
From the low threshold of the cot she past,
Where sad Laurentia sought repose at last;
And on the weeping orphans as she smiled,
Thus soothed their fears, and spoke in accents mild:
"Advance, poor wanderers, and dismiss your fear,
"A friend I come, your drooping hearts to cheer.

XLIII.

"Full on your sight the walls of Sere arise, (7)
"The ancient towers of Melaric the wise;
"Who to the friendless wanderer grants his aid,
"And joys to heal those wounds that war has made.
"Long since his care, upon the desert Lande,
"'Neath the tall pines, a hermitage had planned.
"The wandering stranger on the thirsty plain
"Refreshment there and shelter might obtain;
"But late the vengeful Moor to dust has trod
"Each spot devoted to the Christian's God.

XLIV.

"Deserted, hopeless, exiles if ye roam,
"Here shall ye find, and only here, a home.
"A jealous troop the neighbouring hamlets hold,
"Keen in pursuit, and in resistance bold.
"Tempt not the vengeance of their lawless power,
"But seek for refuge in yon friendly tower.
"Subjects of Aquitania's prince, we bear
"Our liege's banner, royal Clovis' heir,
"But fierce Almanzor's impious yoke disdain,
"Nor our bright swords in civil bloodshed stain."

XLV.

She spoke, and towards the queen advancing, pressed
Each wondering orphan fondly to her breast.
With cheering hope their fainting hearts inspired,
Smiled, and beneath the lowly thatch retired.
" O say, my mother, say," Siagre cries,
" What bids these transports in my bosom rise?
" Who may this virgin be, this fair unknown,
" Whose voice, methought, was gentle as thy own?
" Clasped in her arms I felt all fear depart,
" And seemed as folded to a mother's heart."

XLVI.

" I too, my sons," Laurentia cries, " like you
" Feel my sad heart dilate with transports new.
" No mortal accents thus could whisper peace,
" Assuage our fears, and bid our sorrows cease.
" But heaven's dread mysteries no farther seek,
" Heaven's will enough these friendly counsels speak.
" Now to sage Melanie's high towers we speed,
" His aid imploring in this hour of need:
" An ancient loyal knight, whom once I knew;
" Your father loved him, generous, brave, and true."

XLVII.

Thus as now hopes within her heart revived,
Laurentia at the castle's gate arrived.
While Melanie, 'midst his hoary veterans, told
Of hard-won fields, and martial deeds of old.
" Alas, my friends," he cries, " the time I knew
" When paladins were brave, and Franks were true.
" Faith warmed their hearts, and valour nerved their hands,
" When Abderama's host assailed our lands.
" Led by Martel, no Christian then but swore
" One deep eternal hatred to the Moor.

XLVIII.

"Ne'er shall my soul that glorious day forget,
"On Poitiers' plains when Moor and Christian met.
"'Twas the first day that on my sight arose
"The waving standards of embattled foes.
"That impious host, beneath the great Martel,
"Twice fifty thousand, with their leader, fell.
"Then was proud Cordova's usurper slain,
"And now, just Heaven! Austrasia bows to Spain;
"Leagued are Martel's descendants with the Moor,
"And France is deluged with her children's gore.

XLIX.

"'Tis true that in their court, unseen, unknown,
"Held in their vassals' chain, our princes groan.
"These in their name usurp an impious sway,
"Despotic rule, and bid their kings obey.
"Theodebert and Gaiffre, foes disguised,
"With wily craft our loyalty surprised.
"Ah, did not helpless age our strength restrain,
"Soon should we rouse the lords of Aquitain;
"Soon should Austrasia for her bondage blush,
"And her bold arm both Moor and traitor crush.

L.

"But feeble threats now mark our deeper shame,
"And Gaiffre rules us in our prince's name.
"Myself a useless victim lest I fall,
"I bear the tyrant's banners on my wall.
"But this repents me... Better from the foes
"An honourable death, than mean repose.
"No—to this slavish yoke no longer yield,
"But die like soldiers in the well-fought field.
"Blood for our blood the tyrant shall repay,
"And vengeance wash Austrasia's stain away."

LI.

He spoke prophetic, while his looks he cast
On the proud spoils of many a combat past.
Spears, crests, and pavice, on the ample wall,
And bannered trophies, deck the gothic hall.
Hauberks, which once his brave forefathers wore,
The swords they wielded, and the shields they bore,
Each marshalled on the wall in order due,
Met, in this favourite spot, the hero's view;
These would the courage of his youth revive,
And bid his long past deeds in memory live.

LII.

'Midst faithful vassals dwelt the good old knight,
The bearers of his banners once in fight.
Courageous squires, that had his perils shared,
A veteran band, whom war and age had spared.
One of this train, in haste advancing, seeks
The trophied hall, and thus his errand speaks.
"A mother and her orphans, 'scaped by night
"From Bordeaux' tyrant, here have bent their flight
"To these our wonted cares are duly paid;
"They now demand thy presence and thine aid.

LIII.

"Thy numerous servants, faithful to thy will,
"Duly each hospitable rite fulfil;
"But in her breast the mother seems to bear
"Some fatal secret hid with studious care.
"Chief to thyself admittance does she seek,
"Her message in thy private ear to speak.
"Beneath her coarse attire more brightly shine
"The lovely features of a face divine.
"Such children, such a mother, ne'er before
"Have sought admission at thy friendly door."

LIV.

Alone, the suppliant's presence left to wait,
Melarie deplores the woes of civil hate:
For in those times, when war and discord reigned,
The wretched Christians, exiled or enchained,
Dispersed o'er guilty Aquitania fled,
Oppressed by sufferings, or subdued by dread.
"—Doubtless the tyrant Moor these strangers fly,
"Hiding, perhaps, their noble ancestry.
"Oft, in these times, the same disastrous blow
"Levels at once the mighty and the low."

LV.

Thus while the veteran mused in silent thought,
Laurentia with her sons his presence sought.
Long he observes them, and attempts with pain
Some faded image to recall again;
Till memory aids him, in the children's face,
The well-known lines of Carloman to trace.
Then shows Laurentia 'neath the coarse disguise—
"Just heavens! my sovereign's wife and sons!" he cries.
Then on his knees before them lowly bows,
And pays the homage of his loyal vows.

LVI.

The hand that raised him to his lips he pressed
With warm respect, and thus the queen addressed:
"O welcome hour, that bids my soul rejoice,
"My zeal shall justify my sovereign's choice.
"No more I weep my youthful vigour fled,
"A brighter lustre on my age is shed.
"O blest reward of loyalty and faith!
"Distinguished honour, cheaply bought with death.
"Yes, once more Melaric, ere the tomb shall close,
"Shall grasp his arms, and smite his princes' foes."

LVII.

Then towards a seat, with rich wove tissues spread,
His sovereign and her royal sons he led;
And at their footstool hears his queen disclose
The plots and daring treasons of her foes.
Loudly he execrates the dark intrigue
Of Gaiffre, Longin, and Almanzor's league.
Instant the veteran from the donjon tower
Would tear the banners of a traitor's power,
But prudence checks what loyalty would dare;
His sovereign's safety claims his chiefest care.
For late in Gaiffre's name a Moorish band
Have filled with terror all the neighbouring land.

LVIII.

Now as the gathering shades of twilight fall,
A deeper gloom o'erspreads the gothic hall.
Bucklers, and swords, and spears, and casques, receive
The dark and melancholy tints of eve.
Through many a deep drawn Pyrenean vale,
Chill, loud and piercing, sounds the evening gale.
Shook by the breeze, on helmets helmets dash,
Shield rings on shield, on faulchions faulchions clash;
In plaintive sounds their echoing murmurs rise,
As when some warrior slain in darkness dies.

LIX.

"Heard ye," cries Melaric, "that auspicious sign,
"Omen of good, presaging aid divine?
"Oft, as they say, the spirit of our sires
"In sounds like these their children's breast inspires;
"Speaks in the gale, and bids the breezes bear
"Mysterious echoes through the viewless air.
"Placed at your sacred knees, methinks I hear
"Some more than mortal murmurs strike mine ear.
"Yes—that triumphant sword I grasp again,
"Which erst Martel, on Poitiers' crimsoned plain,
"Girt on my side, when 'neath the conqueror's blade
"Four hundred paladins at once were made.

LX.

"That sword would Melaric's pledged allegiance rouse,
"If e'er, forgetful of his loyal vows,
"He sought to join Austrasia's traitor band,
"And 'gainst his sovereign in rebellion stand.
"But Melaric scorns to play the rebel's part,
"And to his lawful prince devotes his heart;
"And, while with baffled rage the miscreants swell,
"Shall guard from harm the offspring of Martel.
"Soon may we hope to gain, in Narbonne's towers,
"A sure asylum from the traitor powers.
"My faithful vassals shall your course direct,
"And righteous heaven an injured queen protect.

LXI.

"Not Melaric of Austrasia's counts alone
"Abhors the yoke of Abderahma's son.
"These, when they know their kings from Bordeaux fled,
"Will break an impious league, their shame and dread.
"Abused by traitors in their prince's name,
"Respect subdued their anger and their shame.
"That fraud discovered, Gaiffre shall bewail
"His blighted hopes, and see his treasons fail.
"Soon shall we sweep these felon hordes away,
"And on themselves the woes they wrought, repay."

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XX.

FROM THE EIGHTY-SECOND DAY TO THE NIGHT OF THE HUNDRED AND SIXTH.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

Rodmir and Armelia at the walls of Rome. The interior of the Temple carried by the allies. The ruins of Tusculum. The funeral Circus of the Corneliana. Arpin and Ruffinus.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XX.

I.

WHILE now, delivered from their felon foes,
In Sere's low walls the orphans found repose;
The warlike Rodmir, and his barbarous train,
Already win their passage to the plain.
The waves of Zurich and of Garde they see,
And cross those meads of famed fertility
Where old Verona's lofty turrets stand...
The shouts of hope and courage shake the land;
The walls receive Armelia and her knight,
And soon Timantius greets their gladdened sight.

II.

"My faithful friend," the queen in sorrow said,
"We come defeated, but around us spread
"The children of the north, our brave allies!
"Why in Verona? ... speak our destinies...
"At Rome, or Pavia, camp my father's powers?"
"Queen," he replied, "I hold Verona's towers;
"The hateful Frank, within Milan's recess,
"Or hides his strength, or guards his feebleness:
"I watch him there ... meanwhile, your royal sire,
"Your brother, Ezelin, the Greek, conspire
"To lead to sure success our Lombard bands,
"And fill with fear and death the Latian lands.

VI.

oon is he doomed the dread events to learn;
'he Frank's success; the slaughter of Saverne;
'he Saxon monarch's change; the Hun's defeat...
'Oh sire," said Rodmir, "as the tempest fleet
'A haughty conqueror presses on our way:
Abandon Rome, or force, without delay,
'Her hated ramparts... thus thy walls defend:
'And see, beside thee stands thy changeless friend.
Advance! when morning dawns upon the air,
'Let yon proud Vatican our banners bear!"

VII.

My son," cries Didier, "granted is thy vow;
'Rome shall not turn aside my vengeance now:
'Soon shall our brazen engines' mighty force
'Open her shattered ramparts to our course:
'Ere the tenth dawn, our labours shall be o'er...
'Charles shall impede my prosperous path no more:
'None of my cities dread his rage... afar
He bends his march, and wages harmless war.
Vain were his hopes in season to appear
'Before these towers... we heed not his career."

VIII.

'hus, blind with pride, and strong in impious rage,
lis troops more closely in the siege engage:
leneath the hammer's force the oak resounds;
'he weighty beam the keen-edged chisel rounds...
'ar from the walls, meanwhile, but still in sight,
'he plunderers urge the desultory fight.
'o rapine all, remorseless, they consign,
'ottage or palace, monument or shrine:
ll that escaped the Lombard's dreadful swoop,
ields to the fury of that barbarous troop.

III.

" To loyal Aripert, of tried renown,
" Adalgise trusts the care of Pavia's town:
" By my command brave Aripert is led,
" And leaves us nothing from the foe to dread:
" The troops of Egobard avoid the fight:
" Insensible to shame, the cautious knight
" Rests in his walls, and Rome herself appears
" Abandoned now to our avenging spears:
" Be prompt... perchance beneath the Lombard sway
" She bows... and all her glories sink to-day."

IV.

Thus speaks Timantius... in Verona's breast
Rodmir scarce grants a single day to rest:
Soon as the dawn the mountain's summit gains,
He bends his course to fair Ravenna's plains.
Ormez presaged success and triumph high...
Now the twelfth time had earth diurnally
Rolled her accustomed round; and down the heaven
The sinking sun had place to darkness given,
When fierce Irmensul's mournful banners rise
Before the Lombard king's astonished eyes.

V.

Round Tiber's wave the fierce assailants wait,
From Belisarius' bridge to Peter's gate; (1)
Glorious with plunder, and with carnage red,
That impious host their floating ensigns spread;
Soldiers and chiefs before their tents are seen,
And hail with clamours their returning queen:
Adalgise, Ezelin, to meet her spring;
His child advances to the Lombard king...
With other, happier hopes, he saw her part,
And grief hangs heavy at the father's heart.

VI.

Soon is he doomed the dread events to learn;
The Frank's success; the slaughter of Saverne;
The Saxon monarch's change; the Hun's defeat...
"Oh sire," said Rodmir, "as the tempest fleet
"A haughty conqueror presses on our way:
"Abandon Rome, or force, without delay,
"Her hated ramparts... thus thy walls defend:
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"Vain were his hopes in season to appear
"Before these towers... we heed not his career."

VIII.

Thus, blind with pride, and strong in impious rage,
His troops more closely in the siege engage:
Beneath the hammer's force the oak resounds;
The weighty beam the keen-edged chisel rounds...
Far from the walls, meanwhile, but still in sight,
The plunderers urge the desultory fight.
To rapine all, remorseless, they consign,
Cottage or palace, monument or shrine:
All that escaped the Lombard's dreadful swoop,
Yields to the fury of that barbarous troop.

IX.

Behold at length the day of storm arise,
And Rome hemmed in with ruthless enemies:
See to the numerous shrines the affrighted crowd
Succeed by turns, and pray, and wail aloud:
On France, on Heaven, with ceaseless cry they call...
From space to space advancing to the wall,
Enormous battering rams o'erhang the towers:
Through each battalion of the Lombard powers
Darts restless Rodmir, stung with rage and shame,
And thus his burning words their hearts inflame.

X.

"And shall you wall your lingering force detain
"For ever? Follow me! nor here remain
"The haughty conqueror's swift return to know ...
"Advance! and cover all these towers with woe!
"Seize the red torch, the murderous hatchet ply,
"Let only ruins meet the victor's eye!
"Let the death-ladder swarm with hosts of brave,
"Fixed on bright conquest, or a glorious grave.
"By worthless Romans here so long delayed,
"The blushing world shall see our laurels fade."

XI.

He spoke: the Saxons to the Tiber bent,
Led onward to that aged monument,
Whose vast and circular extent contains (2)
The master of the world's august remains.
The Goths disgraced imperial Adrian's tomb...
Beneath their barbarous rule, its holy gloom
Received a martial fort, where, raised on high,
War's iron engines swell into the sky;
Hurl death and terror to the hostile train,
And guard the passage to the hallowed fane.

XII.

But feebly then could Rome withstand her foes,
From the dread Vatican, to where arose
That far-famed mole: Aurelian's lofty towers, (3)
The proud construction of his peaceful hours,
Ended at Janus' hill their stony round:
A pontiff since had shut the sacred ground
Within the city's ancient space, and there
By power well-signalized, by ceaseless care,
Had raised a simple rampart for their guard,
Against the coming evil unprepared.

XIII.

When Wilfrid fell beneath that robber race,
New bulwarks rose around the holy place;
But the chief barrier to the Paynim horde
Was found in good Ruffinus' conquering sword.
Brave Count of Tusculum, that sword he draws
To plead the desolated city's cause:
The imperial tomb, the towers of Janus, held
At his command, their impious foes repelled;
And, braving in the field their host afar,
Oft from the walls he sallied forth to war.

XIV.

Him Adrian chose Laurentia's way to guide
Where Tiber issues in the ocean tide:
In vain, with daring haste, or patient plan,
The foe pursued the sons of Carloman.
Salernum's duke, that warrior fierce, whose rage
Quenched holy Adelard's expiring age,
Displayed his valour and his skill in vain;
Nor could the purpose of his march attain:
His ambuscade Ruffinus well could fly,
Or, sword in hand, his open war defy.

XV.

Thrice victor thus, beneath his guardian care
Martel's descendants and the royal fair
Mount the safe bark; to France he would have led
Their flight; but Latium's chiefs recalled their head,
And bade him listen to his country's cry...
In Ostia's marsh the Lombard enemy,
Leagued with the Greek, his backward course await,
Prompt to surprise the chief and glut their hate:
But conquering, flying now, he reached his home,
And, crowned with laurels, entered mighty Rome.

XVI.

Proud Ezelin beheld his honours fade;
Twice had his blood distained Ruffinus' blade:
Now in his heart impetuous Rodmir came
To rouse new rage and fan ambition's flame:
This valiant pair the combat's signal gave;
Swift was their march beside the winding wave,
Till Cæsar's tomb arrests their course, and there
'Mid clouds of darts their standards high they rear,
While all they scheme their willing soldiers dare.

XVII.

The mellow horn, Byzantium's warriors boast,
Joins the sharp clarion of the Druid host.
In swift array by turns each troop appears,
Springs to the rampart, braves the Roman spears,
And lifts the dreadful ladder to the towers...
Invincible till now, the Latian powers
Prepare to crown their glory, and command
The covered bulwarks with their dauntless band;
But Rodmir comes... at his inspiring strain,
More fierce to battle rush the barbarous train.

XVIII.

Now from the Vatican to Tiber's stream
Did ruthless Death in varying figure seem
To reproduce himself... the shouts, the cries,
Swell on the wind... here o'er the wretch who dies
The assailant climbs, and slowly struggling on
Mounts the red battlements... the top is won!
There, through the ranks, the brave Ruffinus goes,
And reaps a harvest of his falling foes;
Darts, arrows pour, and thousands breathless lie,
And showers of flaming oil, and rocky fragments fly.

XIX.

Girt by the dead stands Adrian's lofty mole,
Like some proud rock round which the tempests roll;
War's crashing engines strike its head in vain,
And its base streams with blood of Pagans slain:
His heavy ladder firm against the wall
Has Rodmir fixed... to triumph or to fall
His heart is set, before Armelia's eyes:
And now, to mount yon threatening tower he tries,
When the ballista hurls bright blazing forth
Its fires, and whelms the warrior of the north.

XX.

His ample buckler rings... asunder flies...
Beneath the wall o'erthrown the hero lies.
Ashamed he rises, and with gloomy brow
Blasphemes the God who guards the Church... when now
The dread Arch-druid meets the soldier's sight...
"Far from these towers, oh king! conduct the fight,
He cries, "pursue my path, and Rome is ours!
"Full in my view amid the embattled powers,
"With bloody laurels crowned, Irmensul came...
"Hear him! I speak in his tremendous name!

XXI.

"Against these ramparts why your efforts guide,
"And thus mow down our army's loftiest pride?
"This fatal tomb, this dreadful hill, presents
"On every side death's countless instruments:
"The Lombard king has better fixed his place;
"Swift o'er the field his footsteps let us trace,
"And round the sacred portal spread dismay . . .
"Success is sure, if valour will obey:
"Child of Irmensul, follow me! our wrath
"Even to the shrine of Christ shall cut a path!

XXII.

"Seest thou yon haughty dome insult the skies?
"'Tis there the weakness of the bulwarks lies,
"Our swift advance no barriers shall restrain;
"Devouring fire shall waste that odious fane,
"And the first torch from Rodmir's hand shall fly . . .
"To us revealed the voice of destiny,
"In Eresbourg's dark wood, has long foretold
"This day, and with it cheered the race of old!
"Bid from this fort thy dauntless bands depart,
"And let my counsels rule thy daring heart."

XXIII.

"What have I heard?" fierce Ezelin replies . . .
"What hast thou counselled, soul of cowardice?
"Thou read the future! Heaven inspirit thee!
"And shall a hero then disgracefully
"Renounce his aim? Oh, how would Rome exult!
"I feel thy sight enrage me and insult,
"Thou base companion of thy valiant prince!
"But if thy dastard words his ear convince,
"Into these walls alone I'll burst my road . . .
"For me . . . my courage is my only God!"

XXIV.

Thus speaks the chieftain, and the rampart gains;
Rodmir beholds, but wavering still remains,
When now the warlike Huns and Saxon crowd
Pursue their priest with acclamations loud:
Reluctant Rodmir, leaning on his spear,
To Didier's ensigns bends his forced career:
His helm and buckler on the dusty field
Inglorious lie; another casque and shield
He grasps, arrives at Peter's holy walls,
And like a tempest on the Christian falls.

XXV.

A monstrous battering-ram incessant played
Against the feeble wall, with bounding head;
The trembling rampart, at each mighty bound,
Groaned deep, divided, fell in ruins round:
The exulting foes behold the yawning breach,
And twice ten chiefs at once its entrance reach,
A thirst for slaughter ... but from Rodmir's sword
Have the first drops of ruddy carnage poured:
Spoleto's Hildebrand, of royal birth,
Beneath the hero's arm has bit the earth.

XXVI.

The Count of Tusculum his cohort leads,
And through the temple's towers and walls proceeds:
Fierce Ursin, and Colonne, the friend of France,
Before him to the sacred gate advance:
Close on the foss they meet the battle's brunt,
Deepening in rage ... Colonne, o'erwhelmed in front,
Low at the feet of brave Adalgise lies:
Ruffinus fiercely on the victor flies...
What glorious deeds by Christian chiefs were done
This awful day! what deathless praise was won!

XXVII.

But Rodmir, Ormez, what can quell their ire?
Each arm resistless strikes with steel of fire:
Never so dreadful did the Druid rise...
None without shuddering met his angry eyes.
Now all Irmensul on his spirit came,
And round his helm a death-denouncing flame,
In mournful circle, wreathed its lurid light:
A lance of iron armed him for the fight;
In winding channels o'er his linen vest
Blood flowed, and fiercer rage inflamed his breast.

XXVIII.

Death follows as he strikes... the spear he bore,
Within the wood of murder armed of yore
Irmensul's idol... underneath its weight
Would bend two warriors: easily elate
The old man brandished his infernal lance:
A hundred flashes in a moment glance
From the struck steel upon the anvil laid...
So bright, so rapid, round that weapon played
The flashing light... before it rolled away,
The Christians open their alarmed array:
Ruffinus only dares the foe withstand,
While from the ramparts fly the trembling band.

XXIX.

But, rallying round their chief, in order form
The sons of Tusculum, and brave the storm:
Ruffinus with a look inspires their zeal...
In squadrons close their docile steeds they wheel;
And there, three hundred of his faithful friends,
Nor carnage breaks their ranks, nor terror bends:
Content to perish if their lord they save,
By Ormez, Rodmir, and Adalgise brave:
Assailed, by turns they sink into the grave.

XXX.

Still twenty chiefs, undaunted at their post,
Beat back the torrent of Irmensul's host:
The Lombard king has seized the fatal hour,
And mounts already to the sacred tower.
Far from the holy gate the foss is past:
The valiant Tusculan surprised, aghast,
Turns on the solemn shrine a mournful eye...
At least before the threshold would he die.
Too slow retreat!... more swift in vain he goes,
On every side surrounded by his foes.

XXXI.

Now, pressing near, the Druid leads the fight,
And dreadful o'er the foss appears in sight:
Irmensul's lance, one moment balanced high,
Glitters, is launched, and hisses through the sky.
The youthful peer bends bleeding o'er his horse...
Through the pierced side has plunged the weapon's force.
His struggling voice, suspended by his blood,
Confounds its murmurs with the gushing flood...
Still by the tightened rein he strives to rise...
He falls, and rayless night o'ershades his eyes.

XXXII.

An aged warrior to the chieftain flew,
Seized in his arms, and from the field withdrew,
As lightning swift... brave Arpin was the knight,
And that remaining band pursued his flight:
Arpin had watched Ruffinus' early age,
Robbed of a parent's care... this hoary sage
Had formed the manners of the noble youth,
His practice virtue, and his lesson truth.
A friend was Arpin, and, severely good,
Drove from his pupil's roof the flattering brood.

XXXIII.

The hero's fall struck hard upon his breast . . .
Weeping, that hero to his heart he prest,
And, but to save a life he dearly loved,
His eyes afar for some safe shelter roved.
"Haste we, my friends, to yonder gate, and thence
"Issue amain, our faulchions our defence,
"And win to Tusculum our daring way . . .
"Cut we our passage through the foe's array,
"Die, if we must, to set our chieftain free . . .
"Let flight, let death, prevent our slavery!"

XXXIV.

Ormez and Rodmir near the temple drew . . .
The warlike Tusculans escaped their view:
But eager Albion up the neighbouring height
Urged his swift host . . . with keen observant sight,
Borne by his troop, he marks a wounded foe,
And feels his soul with savage transport glow;
Pursues the Latin chief with hope elate,
And guides the Saxons to the sacred gate.
The hungry vulture thus descries his prey,
And darts impetuous from his rock away.

XXXV.

Arpin the danger of the chief beholds,
And in his arms his fainting head enfolds:
His mournful friends press round him in the field,
Their twenty bucklers form a single shield:
At once from twenty steeds their swords arise,
One soul inspires their awful energies:
Forward they spring, and seem to dare the fight . . .
Albion, astonished at the gallant sight,
Marches to meet their force, and smiles to view
His powerless foes, so valiant, and so few.

XXXVI.

"Wretches! surrender to my arms! or dread,"
He cries, "the vengeance that o'erhangs your head!"
Still as he speaks, he feels the piercing spear,
And flows with blood: with thousand cries of fear
The Saxon squadrons to his voice reply:
In cohort close, the Latin chivalry
Their murderous swords with double ardour wield;
The ruined rampart pass, and gain the field:
Five of their friends, o'erwhelmed in their retreat,
The Pagan coursers tread beneath their feet.

XXXVII.

Far from the walls the rest their hero bear,
Nor breathe, nor turn to look upon the war:
O'er broken aqueducts and vasty plains (4)
They see time-honoured Tusculum's remains.
Tumultuous yells, that from the valley sound,
Even to the rising mountains roll around,
Far by the wind's assisting impulse spread ...
Those yells revive the little cohort's dread:
Say, from fierce Albion can they hope to fly?
Or must their chief, their good Ruffinus, die?

XXXVIII.

The Saxons only o'er their master mourn ...
But now the generous band approach the bourn
Of their sad flight, and with unceasing speed
Up ancient Tusculum's first heights proceed.
Brave warriors, worthy of a happier doom,
They seek yon woodland's unfrequented gloom;
And, far retiring from their Paynim foes,
Within the still and lonely spot repose.
Staunching the blood that issues from his friend,
See sorrowing Arpin o'er the body bend;
The languid eyes re-open to the light,
And turn on Arpin's face with feeble sight.

XXXIX.

"Where are we?" cries he, "where that impious band?
"Within the sacred walls, oh! let us stand,
"Die for the Church, and for our country's cause!
"Return we to the charge!" . . . He faintly draws
His failing breath, in murmuring sounds of woe . . .
Already from the wound fresh torrents flow,
Urged by his struggling accents, and again
His iron cuirass takes the bloody stain.
Those yells return; on echoes echoes rise,
And war, and threatening tumult, rend the skies.

XL.

Arpin, who dreads the coming tempest's force,
Tow'rds antique Tusculum impels his course.
From this high plain, the wide extending gaze (5)
Rome, Tiber, Ocean, Alba's vale, surveys.
The adverse hill two lofty summits rears,
Veiled with the shady growth of countless years.
Below these shades, in feudal ages traced,
The counts of Tusculum their home had placed;
And, close beneath the eternal night of wood,
Crowned with their banner yet, the turrets stood.

XLI.

In ancient Tusculum none now abode;
Thick heath and thorns its lonely paths bestrode;
Its temples, palaces, in dust were laid,
And powerful Time each day beheld them fade.
Where many a mouldering knoll its head exalts,
Lies in vast ruins, and in opened vaults,
What once was Sylla's dictatorial dome . . . (6)
There, farther on, Lucullus' desert home
With grandeur yet the traveller's fancy fills,
A mighty wreck, spread o'er the sloping hills.

XLII.

The chief surveys the scene with anxious eyes;
In grief the distant turret he descries...
"They come! my friends... Ruffinus' well-known tower
"Affords a sure retreat... but danger's hour
"Demands that hidden in these vaults we lie...
"Ye hear the northern host's barbaric cry!
"Here be our precious burthen safely laid,
"In the green bosom of this guardian shade:
"When fav'ring night conceals us from the foe,
"Forth from these wooded hills again we go."

XLIII.

'Mid the waste desert with a glad surprise
The traveller sees the shady plane-tree rise;
Or, where some palm its branching verdure spreads,
No more the fury of the storm he dreads:
Erect alone amid the champaign wide,
Have these brave trunks the varying year defied:
Thus two antique remains, that conquered time,
Lent good Ruffinus a retreat sublime;
Those honoured walls, where Tully's voice was heard
And where Cornelian ashes are interred. (7)

XLIV.

A tender homage, willingly bestowed,
Guarded the sire of Rome's august abode.
What pure intelligence, what precepts high,
Once bade the echoes of this wood reply!
Hail, Virtue's orator! the Pagan's pride!
Yes, He, the Christians' God, thy lore supplied;
He taught thy mind those deathless scrolls to frame
That lend thy Tusculum her noblest fame; (8)
Point out the right, and lead us still to know
Virtue alone our happiness below.

XLV.

The valley two unequal hills survey,
Where once the sage's honoured dwelling lay:
Half-broken arches, hid with spreading leaves,
A statue that the willing mind receives
For Tully's own, such faith the likeness gains . . .
Behold the Roman portico's remains!
From these dear shades unexiled had I been,
With worthy honours had I graced the scene . . .
When peace shall dawn upon the bleeding land,
And kings their good and nations understand,
(The mist of error from their eyes removed)
Once more may'st thou be mine, retreat beloved!

XLVI.

Dear peaceful solitude! enchanting hill,
By memory's treasures consecrated still;
One happy lustrum, lulled with sweetest cares,
Upon thy summit flowed my youthful years.
Why, why, no longer in thy green recess,
Or fruitful field, that golden harvests dress,
And vines and olives intertwine around,
Roam my blest feet? why, from thy sacred ground,
From night oblivious, rescue I no more
The prized memorials of thy great of yore?
And gather from thy side, with awful hand,
Sages and chiefs, who slept beneath thy sand? (9)

XLVII.

Well dost thou still repay the labourer's toil:
Ask we a classic harvest from thy soil,
Richly thou renderest up thine ancient trust,
And every mattock stirs a hero's dust.
There the false image of those demons vain,
The heavenly progeny of Homer's brain,
In precious fragments rises into light,
From twice ten centuries of silent night.

'here the Cornelian's mighty circus lies,
'allen pillars, tombs, and godlike effigies...
'r Juno's ancient fort attracts our wondering eyes. (10)

XLVIII.

The last sojourn of brave Ruffinus' race,
Where many a Fabian relic yet we trace,
Found by these cares) had late its circle spread
On hoary Tusculum's sublimest head.
The circling steps, and many a statue there,
Alone had braved the force of fire and war,
And time more terrible... but ere the day
That Paynim plunderers, with remorseless sway,
Wrapped these sad hills in desolation's flame,
The Circus rose in all its ancient fame.

XLIX.

The Christians and their kings in pious care
Had vied, this honoured sepulchre to spare;
And filial love, that grew from age to age,
Defended, saved it, from the Pagan's rage,
His fond respect Ruffinus farther showed,
And, round his great forefathers' last abode,
Oft in his active youth, with tender pains,
Had newly graced their consular remains:
But late, above two glorious arches there,
A radiant cross himself was seen to rear.

L.

On the sad structure Arpin fixed his gaze,
Lit by the softened sun's expiring rays:
He hastes within; 'tis there he hopes to gain
A safe asylum for his harassed train:
If in this last recess his foes o'ertake
His path, one dreadful effort will he make,
And sell the life their hatred seeks full dear...
Now mid the dusty tombs the chiefs appear;
In slow advance by turns their way they win,
And safely stand the first recess within.

LI.

Here are the funeral caverns of the slaves,
And here the steeds are fastened mid their graves:
To that vast ring the wounded chief they bear,
Where once the praise of heroes filled the air . . .
Above the seats, where crowds would erst attend
To hear the deeds of some departed friend
In silent grief, the sacred marbles shine
With Sylla's likeness, or, Rutilius, thine;
Antonia, Drusus, or Emilius show,
Or those two victors of the Punic foe.(11)

LII.

Immortal Fabius! at thy statue's base
His weeping friends their loved Ruffinus place:
They raise the peer, and on his naked head
From brazen urn the lustral water shed
In gentle current . . . . but a deadly rest
Weighed on his soul, and every sense oppress:
On the dear form good Arpin fixed his eyes . . .
"Will then at last no ray of hope arise;
"And is he lost?" the sad old chieftain cries.

LIII.

"Never, oh never, shall he quit this tomb!
"But a few moments, and the deeper gloom
"Of night, my friends, had lent its succouring aid,
"And to his native towers the chief conveyed.
"To everlasting grief my soul is given . . .
"Doubtless a poisoned steel his side has riven,
"And snatched the cherished hero from our sight:
"This cruel wound! that seemed at first so slight,
"With ease I staunched the tide of issuing gore . . .
"But those dull eyes shall see the day no more!"

LIV.

While thus in bitter plaints his grief he poured,
And vainly laboured to revive his lord,
To feudal Tusculum's embattled towers
Insatiate Albion guides his rapid powers:
Eager to slay the foe whom he pursues,
Not darkness' self his savage hope subdues...
But lo! arrested in their murderous way,
High walls, impassable, his troops delay:
He vents his rage in loud blaspheming strain,
And calls for war at Rodmir's side again.

LV.

Within the fort swift-circling terror spread:
The youthful soldiers, to the battle led,
Had joined the chieftain at the holy walls...
For help the widow and the orphan calls;
For help deserted wives, with piteous sound,
Disordered driven the stony towers around:
With eyes still rooted on the field below,
They watch the barbarous ensigns of the foe;
While weak old men the ponderous drawbridge move,
And slowly lift the yawning foss above.

LVI.

A dame of venerable age and mien,
With trembling steps to reach the wall is seen,
And view the plain beneath with restless eyes...
Nor can she check her terrors as they rise,
For all she loves on earth, her only son...
"Alas!" she cries, "unless his race were run,"
(The affrighted females crowd in tears around)
"His vengeful arm that impious foe had found;
"And, ere he menaced these abandoned towers,
"Defeat had crushed the bold barbarian's powers."

LVII.

She turns away, and yields to her despair...
The tender group of helpless virgins there,
With soft caresses, and endearing strain,
To calm Rutilia's sorrow strive in vain.
Plunged in deep silence one amongst them seems,
And shuts her heart to Hope's delightful dreams...
She, sadly sitting at Rutilia's feet,
Dreams only of that day of promise sweet,
When brave Ruffinus, crowned with conqu'ring pride
At yon high shrine should claim his happy bride.

LVIII.

Wrapped in her veil the hapless virgin sate,
And drew the dark'ning presage of her fate:
"Fear nought, Camilla! rise!" a female says,
"See fires of triumph o'er the valley blaze!
"Upon the summit of the sacred towers (12)
"Brightens the flame... within a few brief hours
"On Victory's car thy lover shall appear...
"What from these vanquished rovers should *we* fear
"Glory and joy yon welcome fires declare;
"Look how they spread and glitter through the air!"

LIX.

Such cheering words Camilla's sister spoke,
When loftier now the conflagration broke
O'er the bright Vatican; no joyous flame,
But death and ruin to the Roman name:
"My friends," said Albion, "to the field return!
"Yon fires, perchance, the Christian ramparts burn:
"Accurst for ever be the coward's flight,
"At such an hour to tempt my baffled sight,
"And lead my steps to this unhappy height."

LX.

He spoke, and swiftly to the wasted plain
Turns at his voice each Saxon courser's rein...
Thus on the hills when countless windings fail,
The cruel hounds rush harassed to the vale.
Now, deeper sunk in Tusculum's ravines,
The savage chief pervades her forest scenes:
His eye, surprised, on that famed Circus falls;
The shining marble of the spacious walls,
Allures the northern plunderers from their road;
In haste they seek the funeral abode.

LXI.

Dull plaintive sounds from that recess arise;
Stern Albion feels his joy revive, and cries,
"Fortune, my friends, restores our victims here!"
Like fierce assassins, all unchecked by fear,
Within the sacred area bursts the foe...
Scarce have the Latins time their fate to know;
With swords and lances armed, the faithful band
In firm array before their master stand.

LXII.

At their last moments awful are the brave...
As fearless, hopeless, sinking to the grave,
They form a rampart where their leader lies,
Nor quit their ranks till life's expiring sighs.
Arpin, surrounded by his falling foes,
Pressed down at length by still repeated blows,
Crowns with a glorious death his high career;
His valiant comrades fall in order near;
With booty charged, the sanguinary train
Shout in loud triumph, and the tomb profane.

LXIII.

The noise has roused Ruffinus' dying eyes . . .
But when the unholy plunder he descries,
He breathes a plaintive sound, scarce crawls along,
And, in one effort struggling to be strong,
Collects his soul, and rises to advance . . .
His feeble arm has seized a fallen lance,
To strike at Albion through the shade he goes . . .
With bleeding wound his pallid figure shows
Like a sad ghost, that, from his prison freed,
Starts forth in arms to scourge some guilty deed.

LXIV.

The shield resounded with the powerless blow . . .
Before him Albion sees a living foe,
And burns with fury . . . his inhuman hand
Against a life just closing lifts the brand:
But that foul triumph death denies; for here,
Dragged downward by the burthen of his spear,
The helpless chieftain sinks upon the ground,
At Albion's feet, and breathes one sigh profound . . .
Girt by his friends in that sad tomb he lies,
Whence for my lyre his new-born honours rise.

LXV.

The midnight torch shone dreadful o'er the wood,
And lit the desert scene of rage and blood.
All was one waste . . . at length they sallied forth,
Glutted with death, those plunderers of the North.
Beneath the ruins of the hoary walls,
Graced by no funeral rites, the hero falls.
Soldier of Christ, and worthy of the name,
By ruthless foes o'erwhelmed, and robbed of fame,
Long hast thou slept . . . perchance my votive strain
Here raise a tomb, to last o'er thy remains.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXI.

FROM THE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH TO THE MORNING OF THE HUNDRED AND TENTH DAY.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

Charlemagne on the banks of the Tiber. Battle of the Tower of Belisarius. Adelard revenged.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXI.

I.

NOW from high Apennine with eager course
Pours on the vale the mighty monarch's force;
From every circling town and border hill,
Crowds join his march, and swell his army still.
Conquering he comes! Woe to that spoiler, woe!
Thus, in the melting of the mountain snow,
A thousand streams rush forth on every side,
Till each is buried in the central tide;
New size, new strength, the gathering torrent gains,
And bursts in thunder o'er the prostrate plains.

II.

From the three lakes to fair Loretto's meads,
His warlike peers the advancing victor leads;
A numerous host at Egobard's command
Before Spoleto's walls augments the band:
Their fearful chains good Wilfrid's nation broke,
And raised their head from guilt's tyrannic yoke;
Grateful they blest the Frank's returning train,
And heard once more their venerable fane,
Polluted erst with murder's crimson streams,
Of hope and love resound the heavenly themes.

III.

Received in Terni's hospitable climes,
The king beheld the trace of Lombard crimes:
Each hour of rest weighed heavy on his soul;
For sad, beneath impiety's control,
The Christian city for his presence sighed....
With brave impatience, and with generous pride,
Through clouds of dust he urged his hot array,
Along the consul Cassius' ancient way; (1)
Approaching soon the seven famed hills, where high
The Eternal Town spread out before his eye.

IV.

Up his own azure vault the sun arose...
A rapid glance the royal leader throws
From yon steep summit o'er the well-known plain:
But seeks the sacred cupola in vain: (2)
Where that vast monument once filled the skies,
In volume foul a smoky whirlwind flies.
So black, so fatal, o'er the wasted scene,
Speaks Etna's darkness where her fire hath been.
The smothered flame still bursts in fitful showers,
Glares through the cloud, and gilds the fallen towers.

V.

The flying Romans to the mournful king
The tale of Rodmir's bloody conquest bring...
The feeble barrier of the walls he past,
The sacred palace, and the shrine at last,
And Janus' mount, all yielded to his sway...
Fire, plunder, carnage, marked his impious way;
Sublime no more the holy temple stands,
Whelmed by the wrath of his remorseless bands;
But still, unhurt by fire or force, remain
The saintly tombs, and altar of the fane.

VI.

The sole defence of Rome's diminished powers,
Is Tiber's flood... to Adrian's topmost towers,
Worn with long toil, distained with Christian gore,
Stout Ezelin his midnight banner bore.
The vanquished broke the bridges round, but there
Reviving all the courage of despair,
Some chiefs, with brave Colonne, their soldiers lead:
But now the foe prepares a fearful deed...
On bounding courser, o'er the Tiber's banks,
Didier directs the passage of his ranks.

VII.

Lombard and Saxon rush at once to arms,
When shouts of hope, opposed to shrill alarms,
Speak the near advent of the sons of France:
But heavy foot and nimble horse advance,
Turned sudden from the stream; and from the walls,
Where haughty Ezelin to battle calls,
His daring vassals haste to meet the foe,
And through thick heath with agile movement go:
By Tiber's side his standard high he rears,
Where Belisarius' honoured tower appears.

VIII.

Guarding the passage to the north, the power
By Longin left defend that sacred tower;
Where erst the brave Byzantian's warlike hand
Stayed the rude Goth, and whelmed his plundering band: (3)
Their breasts are burning with a patriot's pride,
And... "Here a Greek," exultingly they cried,
"Taught victory's laurels long ago to bloom...
"Call we our father's virtues from the tomb,
"And let our chief, who hears our fame, no more
"The shameful succour of the Moor implore!

IX.

On Tiber's banks, where'er the squadrons wheel,
Rises, expands, and waves, a wood of steel . . .
A chosen band fierce Ezelin attends,
And to the Greek new thirst for slaughter lends.
Up Marius' hill impetuous Didier strains, (4)
And sees, swift hurrying o'er the covered plains,
The Christian cohorts, dreadful in their ire . . .
Theudon's wild host, and Rodmir's soul of fire,
And Ormez, in whose heart Hell's fury glowed,
Spread with their coursers the Triumphal road.

X.

At Milvius' bridge, the sacred portal near,
Shaking the shield, and balancing the spear,
Rodmir, and Ezelin, inspire their host,
And, drunk with pride, of certain triumph boast.
Inflamed with bitter rage each rival peer
Awaits in confidence the foe's career:
So two fierce snakes, whom poisonous herbs have fed,
Raise up erect each Heaven-accursed head;
With hues of brightest radiance beam afar,
And at their den defy the swains to war.

XI.

Which of these chiefs first feel our heroes' wrath?
First through what quarter will they cut their path?
The king no more restrains their bursting fire:
"Rome, and the temple, Franks! in flames expire;
"Strike, strike," he cries, "nor let your mercy spare!"
The powerful eagle rises through the air,
On his foul prey to pounce more fiercely still . . .
Thus Charles ascends yon solitary hill,
From darkling woods pours forth his rapid power,
And falls at once on Belisarius' tower.

XII.

'wice did the assassin chief's unbroken band
'he monarch's terrible assault withstand:
'wice did the Franks approach the Tiber's flood...
mmoveable the true Salernians stood
)pposed, a wall of granite or of brass:
Mid Longin's troops the Latin cohorts pass;
n scattered groups o'erspread the narrow plain,
And cloud the sky with showers of iron rain.

XIII.

Straight to the centre of Byzantium's ranks
Our squadron springs, and near the Tiber's banks,
And nearer still, sows death and carnage round:
There have Spoleto's race their station found;
Yon sable standard theirs; and well they seek
To glut their rage against the ruthless Greek:
Brave Maximus commands the indignant power
Of Wilfrid's friends... see, at his dying hour,
Lifting his gory hands to Heaven in prayer,
The pastor's form yon gloomy banners bear.

XIV.

How dread are those whom vengeance sets on fire!
No captive yet, though crowds of Greeks expire:
And many a flying soldier seeks for aid
Beneath the friendly tower's protecting shade.
Now countless foes fierce Ezelin had slain,
And some the noblest of the Christian train;
When, as he flew from rank to rank, he saw
The Greeks disordered from the fight withdraw:
Full in the midst he darts with wrathful cry,
"And where, ye Greeks! ye cowards! would ye fly?

XV.

"Is it in peace, from toil, from danger far,
"With imaged saints ye wage your only war?
"Think not yon stream shall save your dastard breast
"Fly, if ye will... but meet from me your death!"
He speaks... Byzantium rallies to the fight,
And deeds of fire atone her brief affright.
See the Salernian at her head advance,
And poise sublime in air his weighty lance;
Haste where Spoleto's dauntless warriors stand,
And threat the gallant leader of their band.

XVI.

Beneath his shield brave Maximus retires...
To strike his rival's helm his dart aspires;
But from the triple brass, with shrilly sound,
Glides the vain steel... deep buried in the ground
The long ash quivers with a sullen moan:
Not thus the Lombard's heavy spear was thrown;
Strong, sharp, and hissing to the mark it prest,
And tore, Spoleto's child! thine hapless breast:
The gushing stream the reddened cuirass drank,
And, groaning, at the victor's feet he sank.

XVII.

In youth's fair bloom the gallant soldier died,
As new to arms, and in the field untried,
Here first he brandished his aspiring lance...
Thus, in the balmy fields of blest Provence,
Falls a young olive in the stormy hour,
Just as it bears its earliest fruit and flower:
Grace of the parent plain, the labourer's toil
Well it repaid... but, rooted from the soil,
Forced all its beauty, all its wealth to yield,
A lifeless trunk it withers o'er the field.

XVIII.

Ardent, insatiate, thus the victor spread
The mournful vale with heaps of Christian dead:
But, far away, repulsed, the Lombard band
Call for the succour of his conquering hand:
Swift he returns, reanimates their ranks,
And checks the glorious progress of the Franks:
The brave Odillon first is doomed to feel
The vengeful point of his destructive steel;
Right onward drove the jav'lin's furious force,
And pierced at once the warrior and the horse.

XIX.

On Marius' hill the monarch fixed his eyes,
And o'er its flanks saw countless banners rise:
At Didier's voice the warlike bands descend,
And, on the right, to Milvius' bridge extend.
In order swift the thickening column forms ...
Thus, on the summit of the Cape of Storms,
The pilot gazes with attentive sight ... (5)
When the black point appears above the height,
Danger is certain ... soon, on every side,
Shall yawn the tossed abyss of ocean's tide.

XX.

The pilot speaks ... the docile crew foresees,
In all its rage, the inevitable breeze:
Their hearts are steeled against the whirlwind loud ...
Some on the mast, the neighbours of the cloud,
With watchful eye pursue the driving gale; (6)
Some with firm hand fold back the useless sail;
To one chief voice obedient all are found,
And prompt obey the silver signal's sound.

XXI.

Thus round their king the peers attentive stand . . .
"Companions," cries he, "peril is at hand;
"They threat our flanks . . . go, hot with courage, go!
"And scatter fear and slaughter through the foe.
"Unite your own to Eginhard's array . . .
"There let the miscreants meet their latest day,
"Before wronged Rome . . . divide them, and they die . . .
"Thus shall we win the Tiber and the tower:
"Leave that assassin to my vengeful power."

XXII.

Prompt at the word the Christian files divide,
To join true Eginhard, and leave the tide.
A dusty whirlwind fills the darkened air . . .
On Marius' hill new barriers they prepare;
And twice ten thousand darts and shields compose
The circling rampart of the marshalled foes.
Dread is their front, immoveable, and strong:
Urging at once their fatal steeds along,
Rodmir, and Ormez, from the walls of Rome
Rush on the Franks, and charge their squadrons home.

XXIII.

The monarch sees the danger at its height,
And through Byzantium's centre bears the fight:
Before his horse the oriflamme appears . . .
Of valour famed, twice fifty cavaliers
The sacred banner of the Franks surround,
With carnage red, and scattering terror round.
Like roaring lions in their noble rage,
Amid the Greeks resistless war they wage;
Well, well avenged are now those kindred slain,
Still breathing out their souls upon the plain.

XXIV.

ren to the river's brink the Greeks have fled:
ne watchful monarch marks their panic dread,
ow'rds Milvius' bridge impels his courser brave,
nd hopes to force the passage of the wave.
ull at the tower he flies . . . his daring mind
he valiant Ezelin has soon divined;
eneath the walls are fixed his fearless train . . .
Victors of Greeks!" he cries, "your march is vain!
I meet you here; this portal is my trust;
Pass, if ye can; but through my heart ye must!"

XXV.

He speaks, and hurls his iron lance afar,
Reaching that chosen soldier through the war,
Who bears the standard . . . Godfrey fills his place . . .
Following the mighty dart's victorious trace,
Again the chief, like some gaunt tiger, springs
On a fresh prey, again his javelin flings . . .
Beneath the stroke young Angibert declines,
And in the dust, amid the martial lines,
Trails the long ringlets of his golden hair . . .
The tuneful hero lies in silence there;
And Charles shall hear the numbers high no more
That harp, inspired by Homer, once could pour.

XXVI.

What power unnerves the Paladins of France?
Three chiefs have felt the unconquerable lance.
Thus o'er the fields, dried up by summer's breath,
Venting hot poison from his throat of death,
Some rabid wolf-dog to the flying swains
Bears fear and fate, and drives the desert plains.
So fierce was Ezelin . . . the Tiber's side
Saw, on this day revived, that deed of pride,
When ancient Cocles braved the hostile power . . . (7)
One arm defends the river and tower.

XXVII.

Far off, meanwhile, the Greek and Lombard sank,
And died the plain with blood beneath the Frank:
Strewed with their dead the Roman valley lay,
One hideous banquet for the bird of prey.
There his high prowess England's Heptarch showed
Amid the scattering crowd sublime he rode,
And o'er his smoking horse the crimson torrent flowed
His casque environed with a narrow crown,
As lightning swift he strikes the foeman down:
From rank to rank his native wrath is poured,
And death's red harvest grows beneath his sword.

XXVIII.

Graced with fair chivalry's unspotted fame,
This young defender of the Roman name
To Pepin's mighty son would hardly yield
The palm of valour... now across the field,
And near the tower, he sees with fiery force
The Lombard pressing on stout Godfrey's horse...
With vigorous bound he traverses the plain,
England's brave son, and rushing on amain,
Covers the starry oriflamme in front,
Dares his fierce foe, and courts the battle's brunt.

XXIX.

That foe was destined for another hand...
Charles waits the moment that his prudence planned,
And learns that Eginhard with faithful care
Fulfilled his hopes, and checked the hostile war.
He halts the peers, and through the admiring crowd
Himself springs forward, and exclaims aloud,
"Tiger! thy race is finished... from the tomb
"Cries Adelard, and calls thee to thy doom!
"Here, answer heaven for that pure blood, and die
"In horror, hurled to black eternity!"

XXX.

frightful smile the Lombard's visage shows,
it to his heart the royal menace goes:
fear was stranger to that heart, remorse
ized her own prey, and tore with fatal force.
id in his ear a funeral murmur rings,
voice of death... away his shield he flings,
rasps with both hands his club of giant size,
nd hastes, while France beholds with restless eyes,
o meet the king, who lifts his lance on high,
nd fronts alone his hateful enemy.

XXXI.

rom arm implacable the golden pike
lescends athirst the Lombard's heart to strike...
s awful point no tempered mail withstands;
ut, o'er the monarch whirled with rapid hands,
he mace of iron, sounding through the sky,
alls like a thunderbolt... bright fragments fly
rom his crushed shield, and from his quivering lance
ounds the dread club... the dauntless chief of France
ailed in his aim, and scarce his vigorous form
ustains the incessant fury of the storm.

XXXII.

Exulting Ezelin all fear defies,
And shakes the lengthening echoes with his cries.
Again the monarch's fatal dart is felt,
And through the proud Salernian's glittering belt,
Drives piercing on, but with a downward force
Declines, and plunges in the bleeding horse:
The point plucked out, loud neighs the steed, o'er-
thrown
On earth, rolls, shudders, breathes his dying groan.

XXXIII.

Shame on his brow, and fury in his eyes,
Crushed by his fall, behold the Lombard rise:
The generous king suspends his lifted brand,
"Unequal combat would disgrace my hand,"
He cries ... "I meet thee, Lombard! on the plain.
"Scarce could'st thou hope reprieve like this to gai
"Thou murderer of the old! I ought, perchance,
"Here in thy breast to plunge the ruthless lance;
"Kind for thy crime the sternest doom would be;
"But I obey the laws of chivalry."

XXXIV.

He speaks ... leaps down impetuous from his steed,
And rushes to the fight with daring speed.
Now, hand to hand, in deadly struggle, close,
With mutual wounds and mingled breath, the foes..
Earth shines with blood, and trembles where they trea
Their shattered helms expose each warrior's head:
When, gathering all his strength, with sudden spring
The Lombard turns, then back upon the king,
Wild in his rage, descends with desperate art,
And thinks that thrust at once has reached his hear

XXXV.

The cuirass yields beneath the poniard's blow;
Blood through the triple mail is seen to flow.
But while the Lombard in triumphal trance
Furious exults, Charles lifts a weighty lance,
And strikes one stroke upon that impious head ...
Thus the vast aries, or balista dread,
Breaks, at the hour of storm, with ponderous shock,
The lofty summit of some tower or rock ....
On tottering limbs thus impotent to stand,
Low sinks the Lombard, while each out-stretched ha
Prints its deep pressure on the gory sand.

XXXVI.

ick streams of blood o'er all his visage start;
engthening groan comes heavy from his heart;
ulturnus' warriors draw their chief away,
ired with vain fury, from the luckless fray.
owly they lead his steps within the walls...
ut each defence before the monarch falls:
rosine on its brazen hinge the bursting gate;
n rush the Franks with victory elate;
hased to their last recess the Lombards fly,
nd bear their hero to the turret high.

XXXVII.

f e'er the summit of the cloud-capped hills,
Mined at the base by subterraneous rills,
Nod to its fall, the void and faithless ground
Rolls out beneath, and strews the valley round...
So swift, when robbed of their intrepid head,
Lombard and Greek along the stream have fled.
Wounded, unpitied, in that very tower
But now he guarded with a countless power,
With a few followers of his broken ranks,
The indignant warrior waits the conquering Franks.

XXXVIII.

Godfrey, the heptarch, up the tower advance,
Led fiercely forward by the chief of France:
The vanquished, driven to the top, retire...
Their chief, recalling all his force and fire,
Like the last venom of the wounded snake,
Bids his true host their leader's wrath partake:
Seated, with sword in hand, upon the height,
Pale, furious, firm, a vision of affright,
In whispers low his last command he gives,
And plans another crime while yet he lives.

XXXIX.

By his two warriors followed Charles appears. ..
His bleeding head the guilty Lombard rears:
"Monarch," he cries, "subdued by thee I bow,
"Thou giv'st my death, receive my latest vow,
"And feel Armelia's brother yet?" ... He bends
To earth, and, waiting for the sign, his friends
Rush round at once, and all their treacherous band
Assails the startled heroes sword in hand:
Full twenty javelins from the traitors fly ...
Their chief excites them with redoubled cry.

XL.

Each hero's armour is distained with gore;
Wildly they rage, and round the stony floor,
Salernum's guards on every side are slain ...
Their hopeless chief, with wound that bursts again,
Leans o'er the battlements, and goaded there
By Guilt's Archangel, plunges into air,
And seeks the bosom of the flood below ...
Dashed on the jutting bridge with dreadful blow,
Falls the foul corse ... while Charles, in happy hour,
Rears the triumphant Cross above the tower.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXII.

THE EVENING OF THE HUNDRED AND TENTH DAY AND THE FOLLOWING NIGHT.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

Single combats of the Paladins. The three Montmorencies. The Franks repulsed: Charlemagne wounded. The Arch-druid calls forth Irmensul. The ruins of the church of St. Peter.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXII.

I.

HIGH floats the filled ensign o'er the walls,
nd through his ranks the gazing foe appals.
ew hope to Rome the grateful sight has given,
nd wakes the cry of love and joy to Heaven.
rt by a countless throng, with tranquil mind,
od Adrian waits his close of grief to find:
this propitious day, with solemn care,
thanks the God of conquest in his prayer;
patient thousands to the rampart spring,
nd hail the standard of their guardian king.

II.

ach bridge is broken; but the dogstar's force
inks out, and dries the royal river's course. (1)
he first of heroes in the lessened wave
ith eager haste impels his courser brave;
he clarion's voice inspires the sons of France,
he gay, the gallant Paladins, advance...
ith rapid march the foot behind them pass,
nd check the current with their deepening mass;
lose to his friend each fearless soldier stood,
nd glittering banners danced o'er all the flood.

III.

The doom of Ezelin strikes deep alarms
To Didier's heart ... if conquering France in ar
O'erleaps the stream, within the northern gate
Their welcome host unnumbered friends await:
Some feeble troops of the besieging band
Watch at that gate ... secured they seem to stan
By Tiber's wave, yet certain is their loss,
Cut off from succour, if the foe should cross ...
But Didier, skirting Marius' hill, proceeds
To shake the plain with twice five thousand steed

IV.

On Charles he rushed ... Gisella's lover too
At steady Eginhard's battalions flew:
Valour and love had closely known to bind
This youth to Eginhard's congenial mind:
In Paris' walls their pleasant friendship rose,
On each an anxious look the other throws,
The mute encounter of fraternal eyes ...
Full slow their swords in enmity should rise;
And, from advance on either side controlled,
Both hold their place, and are content to hold.

V.

The royal Lombard 'mid his chiefs of pride
Wins his bold passage through the crowded tide:
Upon the foot he wreaks his bloody wrath,
Ormez and Rodmir follow in his path;
The struggling Frank is forced to a retreat ...
Thus, 'mid the vessels of some numerous fleet,
The winged storm descends with driving blast,
And spreads them wide o'er ocean's bosom vast:
Thus far from Rome to gain whose towers they stre
The barbarous horde their scattered foemen drow

VI.

' far from Tiber, clothed with bright renown,
rles reached the ramparts of the eternal town;
en shouts of tumult from his flying ranks
:alled the victor to the river's banks:
nprudent Eginhard!" incensed he cries,
Jnchecked by him our gathered enemies
.t once have fallen on our yielding bands...
Victory to day is ravished from our hands:
Bend we to yonder towers our backward way,
And for awhile Rome's liberty delay."

VII.

raight to the tower he urged his foaming horse:
he Hun, the Saxon, with triumphant force
etween the river and the king advance...
'fear had ever touched the sons of France,
'hat fatal day their chief had been o'ercome;
'or, on this point, the foe of holy Rome
'ogether poured his numerous bands, and here
.s fell the foot beneath the Lombard spear,
)y furious Rodmir's host detained the while
'ought the brave horsemen in a long defile.

VIII.

'rom Milvius' bridge to where the ramparts rise,(2)
Between two rural walls the passage lies,
That to the People's gate its sides embrace,
And scarce admit three chariots in the space.
No skill in war can here afford relief,
Nor voice, nor eye, nor prudence of the chief:
The weaker fall; they mix without a plan
In shouting crowds, and combat man to man.
Charles and his knights, encompassed here, oppose
The joint incursion of ten thousand foes.

IX.

At Janus' walls within the camp to day,
Adalgise guards Armelia from the fray:
No longer trembling for her cherished life,
All Rodmir's soul is yielded to the strife.
Brave warrior of Toulouse, before his lance
See Childebert too daringly advance;
His wounded side receives the fatal thrust...
The raging coursers roll him in the dust:
Near him Villaire, and Baldwin, find their grave,
And shouts of thunder speak the fallen brave.

X.

With brandished axe to meet the battle spring
Three young Montmaures in presence of their king:
Their sire Lysoi the valiant, who of yore
Slew in the lists the haughty Inistore:
In Poitiers' plain, to challenge all our peers,
This brother of the royal Moor appears
Before Martel... the leader of the Franks
Chose out Lysoi from all his knightly ranks;(3)
Round them two camps in circle vast arise,
And view the rival chiefs with restless eyes.

XI.

From Sol's first rising to his noonday height
They lengthened out the formidable fight:
Yielding by turns, advancing, struggling still,
Each warrior seemed invincible in skill.
The Frank, impatient for the combat's close,
Away at once his sword and buckler throws;
And, lighter from the loss, with rapid dart
Plunges his dagger in the Pagan's heart:
As his fierce rival fell, with noble pride
"*Mon Maure occis!*" the conquering hero cried. (4)

XII.

The gallant cry gave title to his race...
Pleased with so proud a name his chief to grace,
Martel eternalized his triumph there:
The impetuous sons their father's spirit share,
And, filled with equal fire, the undaunted three
Athirst for high exploits of chivalry,
No more to meet their sire's embrace they vow,
Till glory's wreath looks green upon their brow:
Rodmir, and Altimer, and Eric near,
The chosen rivals of the knights, appear.

XIII.

The second Hun was Altimer... on high
Whirling his battle-axe with steady eye,
Brave Henry aims it at his noble foe...
Right through the neck, the crashing helm below,
Glides the sharp edge... Within the sacred walls
Of guilt and carnage, thus the victim falls
To some foul God, beneath his votary's knife...
So struck that weapon at the Pagan's life,
Swept at one blow the gory head away,
While, rolled in dust, the shuddering body lay.

XIV.

But Eric marks the deed so bravely done,
Eric, the rival of the sovereign Hun
In warlike fame... he hurls his vengeful lance
At Aymon, youngest of the chiefs of France:
His riven cuirass yields a yawning path
To the keen point... remorseless in its wrath
It rushes on, and far within his breast
Quivers infixed... He draws the weapon out,
And all grows dark his wandering eyes about.

XV.

Eric's hot courser treads him on the plain,
And his proud voice insults the feeble slain:
When brave Lysoi, to help his brother dear,
All wild with tenderness, and panting fear,
Flew fiercely up... In vain on Rodmir's track
He followed long, and dared him to the attack:
His threats, his challenge to the winds are thrown;
The Saxon hero seeks for Charles alone;
Shouting for Charles, from rank to rank he flies,
Like some black storm that sweeps across the skies.

XVI.

But far above blind valour's lust of fame,
To save his army is the monarch's aim.
Mown down about him falls the Pagan power,
And his path opens to the Grecian tower.
Rodmir pursues... while swift Lysoi afar
Arrests victorious Eric in the war:
Low at his feet the youthful Aymon lies,
Pale his fair brow, and dull his deathly eyes!
Once looks the brother on the bleeding corse,
Then on the Hun leaps frantic in his force.

XVII.

Their coursers' foreheads meet in full career
With mutual shock... at once each crossing spear
Stands deeply sunk in either hero's breast:
Near the same plains, by kindred rage possest,
With Aruns (5) fought that son-destroying sire...
They scorned defence; and, blind with hatred's fire,
Both hotly running on the rival brand,
Breathed their brave souls together on the sand.

XVIII.

Thus fell at once the Frank and Saxon foes:
Two powerful arms had dealt the deadly blows:
His life blaspheming the barbarian pours...
On Heaven, on Charles, on her whom he adores,
The Christian's last remembrance loves to dwell...
Wretched old man! true champion of Martel!
Thou, in thy lonely turret far away,
Dreamest of thy boy's return from day to day...
One still is thine...a brave and numerous race
From Henry's loins shall spring, the regal lily's grace.

XIX.

Yielding their own for Eric's life, thy sons
Have saved retreating France...the restless Huns
From Rodmir's hand a prompt support implore:
Robbed of their chief, their daring is no more;
Their hope declines, and feebly they oppose
The deadlier efforts of their desperate foes:
No Eric now the barbarous horde inspires
With courage kindled by their leader's fires;
And, step by step, o'er many a panting corse,
Toils through the close defile the Christian force.

XX.

But Rodmir there, with glorious dust o'erspread,
Ranged on the river's side, 'mid heaps of dead;
Bathed in the noblest blood his murderous spear,
And checked the bravest in their high career.
Velant's sad field he now repairs...his hand
Has scarce laid low upon the bloody sand
The gallant Ranier, when again he throws
The unsafed javelin at his falling foes:
Austrasia's Arnould feels that javelin fierce
His shattered hauberk's (6) mail of silver pierce;
He sinks, unequal to the rude attack;...
The smoking weapon issues at his back.

XXI.

Of his two brothers robbed, Montmaure the brave
Conducts his docile troop to Tiber's wave:
Rodmir's loud threats he scorns, with steady pace
Following along the bank his monarch's trace:
He sees great Charles his own hot rage subdue,
And give up vengeance for a nobler view,
The safety of his host ... by slow degrees
The way is won through circling enemies;
The victor Saxon holds the battle-plain,
But from those walls the Frank is clear again.

XXII.

Charles to the centre of the stream proceeds,
But death has thinned his heroes and their steeds:
Their broken squadrons at his biding form,
And brave the Pagan javelin's iron storm.
See the vast circle of his lifted shield
To many a Frank its radiant shelter yield;
But Richard, Clermont's son, before him flies,
And, "press, Oh king! thy tardy march," he cries,
"No longer here the coming danger court,
"But save the Christian world's supreme support!"

XXIII.

Straight to the helmet of the generous peer
Came whizzing o'er the wave a monstrous spear,
And broke the double brass, and pierced his neck ...
Nor even this the fatal point could check,
But, glancing downwards, on the king it bore,
And dyed his mailed arm with gushing gore ...
As Richard fell beneath the mighty stroke,
Expiring, thus the gallant soldier spoke:
"What thought more welcome to the dying brave,
"What nobler honour than their king to save!"
Round rush his friends, and, seized with blank affright
In mournful silence struggle through the fight.

XXIV.

› Ormez' arm his wound the monarch owes;
› dread a spear 'tis Ormez only throws:
ack on the vanguard of the Paynim train
he vengeful peers would plunge their steeds again;
ut, "curb your rage," the wounded hero cries,
Soon shall our swords their arrogance chastise;
War has its happy and its luckless hours...
But let your noble minds collect their powers,
And learn with temperate rule to calm the flame
Of fruitless valour, and ungrounded shame."

XXV.

He spoke, and streaming through the brasset (7) ran
Blood o'er the Tiber from the matchless man...
Vain, from the bosom of the miscreant host,
Burst upon air that loud victorious boast!
Their guardian tower the Christian bands have won;
And now, o'er Janus' Mount, the waning sun (8)
Shot a pale ray, when, all with toil foredone,
Adalgise, Eginhard, their camps regain;
And welcome shadows wrap the humid plain. (9)

XXVI.

With cries of joy the Franks around the tower
Receive their king, and hail the auspicious hour:
But sunk in grief return the cavaliers;
The English heptarch at their head appears,
And holds in front Martel's enormous shield:
To this true knight the king is forced to yield,
Weak from his wound, the burthen of his arms...
On Charles each eye, on Charles, in fond alarms,
Each heart is fixed; his paleness owns the blow,
And o'er his milk-white steed the streams of crimson flow.

XXVII.

At this sad aspect cease the clamours loud,
And moody grief o'erwhelms the affrighted crowd:
The valiant peers, who on this fatal day
Breathed in the field their glorious souls away,
From rank to rank long feeble cries excite...
The king surmounts his sufferings at their height;
His fiery wound with tranquil courage views,
And fortune's worst extremity subdues;
Calms with a word affection's anxious zeal,
And ceaseless watches o'er his army's weal.

XXVIII.

Infuriate Rodmir o'er the Tiber stood,
Eager to brave the dark and dangerous flood;
Drunk with fierce daring, on the tower his eyes
Are turned..." Ye children of the North!" he cries,
" Advance! and o'er the river force your way!
" Thus shall the night, victorious, crown the day!"
Relentless Ormez, shouting at his side,
Already plunges in the shadowy tide...
What Hun, what Saxon, joins the intrepid pair!
Death has struck down the bravest warriors there.

XXIX.

The Lombard monarch, with a gentle art,
Restrains the noble rage of Rodmir's heart:
" Victims enough of yonder hostile race
" This day, my friend, your glorious sword to grace,
" Have breathed their last... upon the river's bank
" Camp with your chiefs, and if the reckless Frank
" Once more should dare your prowess to sustain,
" Compel his host to shameful flight again:
" Let not the tower invite your warlike wrath,
" And promise here to check your conquering path."

XXX.

slow consent the chief is seen to yield
o Didier's wish . . . and o'er the tented field
axon and Hun in thick battalions lie . . .
Meanwhile, where bursting smoke ascends the sky,
Around the ruins of the holy walls
The apostate king his numerous band recalls:
Throughout the night, with military care,
The foss and fallen rampart they repair;
Arrest the flame, the dire balista arm,
And view each shattered bulwark with alarm.

XXXI.

Their harassed friends, while darkness deepened still,
Had left the heathy paths of Marius' hill;
And Janus' walls the Lombard army veiled,
Assailant erst, but now itself assailed.
Adalgise, Aripert, Timantius there,
Convoked in silence, meet the royal fair;
In Adrian's mole they meet, a scene of gloom . . .
When Didier, treading o'er that ancient tomb,
Trusts, in these accents, to his offspring dear,
And sage old friends, his wavering hope and fear.

XXXII.

" Yes, we have driven the sons of France to flight,
" And many a foe has fallen in the fight:
" But Ezelin is gone, and far from hence
" On ocean floats the Moorish fleet immense . . .
" Late in the horizon o'er the bounding tide
" We saw their foremost vessels proudly ride:
" Their glittering sails, alas! are seen no more:
" Those eastern blasts, on vexed Etruria's shore,
" With thwarting force their onward path annoy,
" Deceive my hope, and dissipate my joy.

XXXIII.

" Meanwhile, more favored, to our distant coast
" Great Pepin's son brings back his countless host;
" Such as his sire, unwearied, ardent, dread,
" While o'er the Rhine I thought his bands were le
" Already conquerors of the northern horde,
" Behold those bands on pale Italia poured!
" He comes to foil my vast design; secure
" Leaves ravaged Aquitaine to glut the Moor,
" And braves a civil war to follow me...
" What power inspires this burning enmity?

XXXIV.

" On me the war must turn, whate'er it cost;
" And Eric, Theudon, Witikind, are lost,
" Bavaria's lord, and Ezelin the brave,
" All lost to us, some withering in the grave.
" Friendship, opinion, courage, are combined
" Sincere, self-willed, supreme, in Rodmir's mind:
" His true device, " To triumph, or to die!"
" But scarce two thousand can his host supply,
" And Longin's fleet, that mocks my anxious sight,
" Brings twenty thousand Moors to swell the fight.

XXXV.

" Oh, may the prosperous wind my vows fulfil!
" But let us wait the Moorish succour still...
" We in these walls, and on the river's bank
" Our friends, avoiding combat with the Frank:
" Certain success will follow our repose...
" Adalgise in the city of our foes
" Past his fond youth, and won the favour there,
" The faithless favour of great Pepin's heir:
" To Charles's camp, when dawns the coming day,
" With peaceful words my son shall take his way,
" And, if he can, the doubtful fight delay.

XXXVI.

Nor can the king our proffered truce disdain:
Say, will he leave unburied on the plain,
To birds obscene a lamentable prey,
All whom the ruthless sword has swept away?
Doubtless he'll grant our wish ... he sees in tears
The Cassian way encumbered with his peers;
Let then both armies recognise with grief
The lifeless form of many a kindred chief:
And while the busied crowd their loss deplore,
Oh, may the Saracen but reach the shore!"

XXXVII.

Thus Didier yielded to his new designs:
Meanwhile, encircled by his savage lines,
Slept haughty Rodmir on the Tiber's side;
But scorning rest, and seated by the tide,
Amid his host the Druid wakes alone:
On the high tower his lurid glance is thrown;
Blaspheming thus he speaks with furious air...
"My God deserts me! and a fruitless blow
"This arm to-day has levelled at the foe!

XXXVIII.

"Safe from my lance has Christ's defender fled:
"Through all the war I sought his hateful head,
"In vain ... and when, the herald of the grave,
"My swift-winged javelin sounded o'er the wave,
"A wretched vassal intercepts its path,
"Devotes himself, and disappoints my wrath,
"And saves my foe... with zeal that never swerved,
"Oh thou, whom forty winters I have served,
"Thou cruel God! whose falling power by me
"Was raised... shall France be crowned with victory?

XXXIX.

"Is this the meed my faithful toils have won?
"Forget'st thou then the service of thy son?
"Victims on victims... have they not been thine,
"Till my red arm has drooped before thy shrine?
"The cry of nature have I not suppress't,
"Till not one murmur rose within my breast,
"While in the bleeding hearts of young and old
"I searched, thy will of darkness to unfold?
"God of the North! dread Odin's heir! be seen!
"Leav'st thou all wonders to the Nazarene?"

XL.

Thus his foul God in execrable prayer
The Druid calls, and shakes the shuddering air...
To scourge his crimes, the Eternal hand has given
Free passage to the enemy of heaven...
Uprose the homicide Colossus, bright
In brazen mail, and horrible to sight,
As the blood-idol in his Saxon wood!
Before his trembling priest confest he stood...
"That hand indeed has spared no blood for me...
"Ormez, I hear... behold thy Deity!

XLI.

"My breath inspired thee, when at Rodmir's side
"To yonder shrine thy fury was the guide;
"I stalked before thee through the dying band,
"And the first torch... I gave it to thy hand!
"Keep'st thou my laws?... within the blazing fane,
"Say, didst thou lead thy sanguinary train,
"And raze that altar of the God I hate!
"This is my will... on this depends thy fate...
"Still, still, it stands! forgetful here alone
"Thou fail'st, or conquest had been all thine own."

XLII.

ink into shade, the giant form is gone...
Vith beating heart, and eye still gazing on,
threatening shout the Druid pours aloud!
hrough all the midnight camp the startled crowd
elieve they hear the signal for the fight...
Vith many a lifted axe, and torch's light,
·menaul's soldiers arm their daring hands...
:odmir around him holds his guardian bands;
'he rest with impious clamour rend the skies,
and follow Ormez where his fury flies.

XLIII.

Near Adrian's mole they urge their reckless course,
And pass the walls: there, prey to his remorse,
The Lombard king the night in watching spent...
The Saxon's tumult, and his foul intent,
Aroused the apostate's conscience, and his fears
Lest He, the Godhead of his youthful years,
From whom with daring cowardice he fled,
Should launch the avenging thunder at his head!
In this sad moment to reflection given,
He hears, and trembles at the voice of Heaven;
But dreads still more his fierce ally's control,
Nor shakes the Druid from his feeble soul.

XLIV.

The true Adalgise to his father flies...
" Sire, does thy countenance permit," he cries,
" The Paynim host our altars to o'erturn?
" Not yet the flames the holiest precincts burn;
" They spare the sanctuary's walls, and round
" The sacred columns is a circle wound,
" Radiant, miraculous... myself have gazed
" On the dread vision, and in vain amazed
" Shall we behold it? Oh, let me withstand
" The northern plunderer's sacrilegious hand!
" To my brief guidance trust thy martial band.

XLV.

"Already murmuring through the astonished train,
"Breathe the mixed sounds of horror and disdain:
"Spoleto saw me scourge the injurious Greek,
"Our laws unpunished shall the Saxon break?
"Against the Roman pontiff if we war,
"Keep we at least this sacrilege afar:
"Be not the Lombard here the pagan's friend ...
"End, in the name of heaven, my father, end
"This fatal silence! ... if thy sons should die,
"They cannot save thee from the offended sky."

XLVI.

"My son," said Didier, "I approve thy zeal,
"And, like thyself, the Saxon's error feel ...
"But if a triumph o'er the Frank I boast,
"This day I owe it to their faithful host.
"I cannot arm thee with our friends to fight:
"Conceal we rather from our subjects' sight
"The oppressive sadness of the pious heart:
"From the wronged shrine our troops shall stand apart
"The restless ardour of thy soul restrain ...
"The Pagan claims the pillage of the fane.

XLVII.

"When vanquished Rome my regal power shall own
"To thee I swear, before the Almighty throne,
"Amid the smoking wreck of Peter's shrine
"My righteous arm shall raise the cross divine:
"An humbler pontiff shall the Church command,
"And peace and victory shall console the land
"For all the woes our enterprise has wrought ...
"Offerings and prayers shall to the shrines be brought
"And speak our glowing zeal; but prudent now
"My son, this necessary rage allow ....."

XLVIII.

hese words arrest, but not convince, the youth ...
ar from all eyes his anguish and his truth
e bears ... forbidden, melancholy, slow,
nd drinks his lonely tear-drops as they flow.
o bend a victim to misfortune's weight,
isella's noble lover, is thy fate;
ill to mourn on, nor ever set thee free
rom the harsh yoke of frowning destiny:
› 'mid the woodland flowers the fairest grows
nseen, and, withering in its wasted snows,
alls the meek lily o'er the shady bed,
Vith not one sunbeam on its beauteous head.

XLIX.

'heir chieftain's absence chills the Lombard band:
'he shrine is yielded to the Pagan's hand.
'ast ruins strew the Church ... on every side
'till wastes and burns the conflagration wide:
'he calcined marbles with the glowing light
parkle by turns, and fall in fragments bright
eneath the o'erarching roof ... remote and faint,
leams through the shade the form of many a saint;
'he unhallowed horde advance, and as they go
ad echoes roll o'er the deep vaults below. (10)

L.

ligh o'er the wreck of many a sacred porch
'ierce Ormez climbs, and lifts his blazing torch
nd bloody axe, till now with lurid eyes
'he Holy Place, exulting, he descries ...
Vhen, boldly raised o'er Etna's burning height,
'he hardy traveller casts down his sight
n the deep crater's circular abyss,(11)
le starts, he shudders ... with surprise like this,
'he alarmed Arch-druid spread beneath him saw
'he shrine of Heaven, and stopped in sudden awe.

LI.

A golden glory with portentous ray
Shot o'er the dome a brilliant stream of day:
Untouched, triumphant, in the central shrine
Glowed the pure altar with the light divine!
There hallowed Sion's far-famed columns grace (1
With radiant shaft the venerable place;
Up the dread roof their marble windings grow,
And shade the precious crucifix below:
So stands revealed the blest apostle's tomb,
To Hell, and Ormez, clothed in all their gloom.

LII.

Irmensul's soldiers feel their courage die...
They dare not touch the ark of the Most High.
"Slaves," said the priest, "what dread is this ye fe
"Chilling your rage, extinguishing your zeal?
"Fear ye this bronze inanimate? this ring
"Of fire?... a vain and visionary thing!
"Behold the shrine of Christ! by whom *undone,*
"Falls the lost power of Saxon and of Hun:
"Race of the North, avenge your injured land,
"Follow my guidance, strike with willing hand!"

LIII.

He speaks... leaps down, and maddening, rushes c
Where radiant round the golden glory shone.
Full on the shrine he hurls his flaming brand,
And strikes the Saint of Saints with impious hand!
The brazen axe re-echoes as it falls...
Rolling at once around the shadowy walls,
Aerial thunders burst in vollies dread,
Launched o'er this new Abiron's guilty head. (15
Firm stands the shrine... the raging whirlwind gro
The living God is there... and strikes his foes!

LIV.

:h long reverberating crash below
rough the deep vaults the peals tremendous go:
e shaken temple's vast foundations rock
neath their feet... break up with awful shock,
d bury half the host!... with phrenzied cry,
r from the storm the pale survivors fly;
d scattering terror through their kindred ranks
nounce the avenging God who rules the Franks.
retches! this gulf, and mighty tomb, foretell
e eternal gulf, the unbounded tomb of Hell.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXIII.

NIGHT OF THE HUNDRED AND TENTH DAY, AND MORNING OF THE HUNDRETH AND ELEVENTH.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

The Catacombs of Rome. Truce of two days. Farewell of Adalgise to Eginhard. Treachery of Didier.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXIII.

I.

YET. o'er the world the veil of night was spread:
Soft slumber hovered o'er the monarch's head,
And calmed his pains; when echo wakes around,
Roused by a sudden subterraneous sound,
Scattering alarm through Belisarius' tower...
The twice five peers, who watched with guardian power
Beside their sleeping chief's august retreat,
Perceive by turns beneath their startled feet
The murmuring caverns shake, and listening stand
In eager concourse, an astonished band...
Have then their furious foes this plot designed,
And the king's grave beneath these ramparts mined?

II.

The chosen knights brave Isambard controls,
And marks the fearful echo as it rolls...
Close to the walls he leans his watchful ear,
And seems the voice and step of war to hear:
The sounds approach, increase, redoubling peal...
The Franks, confused, impetuous in their zeal,
Disturb their monarch from his light repose:
Beneath the eyes of Isambard arose
The ground, and arms, and torches glittered near...
He pours a cry of war, and grasps his gallant spear.

III.

A radiant cross to his astonished eyes
Slow through the opening earth is seen to rise:
In sacred robes an aged man appears,
And with raised hand upon the cavaliers
Calls down the blessing of the God of peace...
"And bid," he cries, "your soldiers' clamour cease:
"The sovereign pontiff sends us to your ranks,
"And hails the friendly monarch of the Franks:
"Beneath the ground, concealed from impious sight,
"A secret path has led our steps aright."

IV.

The band is re-assured: their leader's tone
Makes order, confidence, again their own:
While swift and silent every footstep falls,
Gonsalvo's warriors inundate the walls.
The pontiff's faithful friend, he held his power
From feudal sires in Toscanella's tower: (1)
Adrian and Rome his zeal, his valour loved,
And danger's hour his firm devotion proved:
The pastoral sceptre with the ducal crown
He bore, and reaped at once their joint renown.

V.

From Toscanella's dukes, of ancient birth,
Spring scions of hereditary worth
In every age: One chief by Xenil's tide, (2)
Displaying erst the soldier's generous pride,
Defended Ferdinand, and nobly broke
The Spanish Moor's intolerable yoke.
Then was the glorious work of brave Martel
By the Great Captain's hand accomplished well:
The Christian world eternalized his fame,
And gave her champion this illustrious name:
Grenada bowed, and Rome's blest ensign shone
From sea to sea, o'er conquered Arragon.

VI.

· in our days has failed that honoured race
bear a son his ancestors to grace:
ple in grandeur, firm in threatening woes,
salvo's mind the purple rarely shows.(3)
apless times the sire of Rome relies
Him, to shield a holy enterprise:
Him the Church expands a mother's breast,
d calls her wandering sons of France to rest.
h friend of Clermont! take the pledge sincere
fond remembrance, that I offer here...
ough wide between us ocean's waters roll,
l let my song recall me to thy soul!

VII.

ne, Gonsalvo thus the king accosts:
reat prince, our walls are open to thy hosts!
The Christians erst, to fly from servile chains,
Quitting in crowds their cities and their plains,
Dug boundless caverns underneath our feet:
Thousands of sons of Rome in this retreat
Have found alike their cradle and their tomb:
Long stood their altar in these realms of gloom (4)
Dearer than day... and through the vast abode
Hither we wound our undiscovered road.

VIII.

When o'er these walls thy conquering colours waved,
We saw, we glorified the God who saved:
Deign to pursue our path... Rome turns to thee,
And to her bosom calls thy chivalry.
When day shall dawn, the sacrilegious foe
His useless siege and labours shall forego;
See all his efforts impotent and vain,
And fly the Tiber's freed and happy plain:
When Rome beholds the Franks within her towers,
'Monarch, we feel a certain conquest ours!"

IX.

"My grateful praise," said Charles, "to Heaven I p
"That mid the tombs has opened me a way!
"The sovereign pastor's wishes I fulfil;
"Rome sees the Franks... accomplishing my will,
"The valorous Montmor shall your path pursue:
"This noble chieftain to the pontiff's view
"Shall guide the bravest of my warlike lines,
"And speak, this very hour, my high designs.
"Didier in vain shall place his hopes in flight;
"The insulted Church no more shall he affright.

X.

"What then! shall crimes like his have reached their
head,
"And flames and rapine o'er the land have spread,
"And we, content to cleanse the holy coast,
"To such success as this confine our host?
"No!... farther yet my daring hope extends,
"And Heaven directs my aim to loftier ends.
"No longer shrinking from my fate, I go
"What God ordains to execute below:
"Propped by this sword the cross shall widely sway,
"This sword shall fix the Lombard's latest day."

XI.

He speaks; and, master of his pain, commands
Brave Montmor to direct his faithful bands.
A lance upholds his footsteps, wavering yet
And weak... He seems already to forget
His double wound, from Ezelin's fell sword,
And Ormez' dart... the crimson stream that poured
From both, still fresh upon his mail appears:
The king comes forth amidst his cavaliers;
And Montmor, as the night begins to wane,
Through the dark cavern leads his warlike train.

XII.

Light chiefs attend him; while, with sudden haste,
In order round a thousand spears are placed.
The flaming pine sheds lustre on their path,
And down they march, inspired with noble wrath.
The vault re-echoes to their heavy pace...
By turns two soldiers fill the narrow space.
The valiant Grecian, in his glorious hour, (5)
Dug the deep avenue with toilsome power,
And lengthened out its course beneath the tower.

XIII.

The marching warriors hear above their head
The royal river roll his torrent dread.
The labouring Greek had traced beneath the wave
This path, propitious to the hidden brave.
But, o'er the stream, near where the ramparts rise,
On every side the Frank astonished eyes
Enormous vaults, where Montmor's whole array
Their spreading ranks could easily display.
The clustering torches through the caves profound
Shoot their pale rays, and point the roads around.

XIV.

A thousand roads, diverging with the light,
Cross the waste gloom, the city of the night.
Recesses open in the rocks, and show
The bloodstained cross in many a mournful row.
Beneath the solitary arches stand
Round, stony vases, where that exiled band (6)
Crushed their rude grain: far hidden from the day,
Plunged in these depths of sadness and dismay,
They lived to die; and in their generous prayer
Breathed only good for those who held them there.

XV.

From space to space against the walls arise
The sacred shrines that soothed their miseries,
And bade those suffering Christians mourn no more
The soldier, hardened to the battle's roar,
Untouched by soft compassion could not see
Lengthening in grief this lonely gallery
Of cells, of altars, and of tombs, that trace
The holy fervour of that ancient race.
What human crowds, in these sad vaults content,
Aspired to Heaven by earthly banishment!

XVI.

Still winding on, Gonsalvo and the Franks
Close to Severus' arch unite their ranks.
There, in the sombre cave that yet remains,
The sainted Peter long was held in chains.
Those chains, suspended to their iron ring,
Erst, in the depth of night o'ershadowing,
At once were broken by the hand of Heaven...
A pious kiss the warlike Frank has given (7)
To those sad bonds... they reach the gate of brass,
And from the realm of darkness swiftly pass.

XVII.

The Roman forum, in its ancient round,
Received the host ascending from the ground.
The star of morning struck with earliest ray
On Jove's fallen shrine, "majestic in decay;"
And lit that hill, the Cæsars' proud abode...
There many a temple of some fabled God (8)
Rose into Christian fanes: and many a tower,
Arch, column, monument of ruined power,
Deeds of old daring by their names restore,
War, and forgotten peace, and chiefs and kings no more

XVIII.

Pleased with the solemn sight the warriors stand...
Then, o'er the Way of Triumph, lead their band.
Beneath that ample vault they soon arrive,
Where Israel's antique tent and ark revive,
Graved on the stone amidst her captive race:
"Here," said Gonsalvo to the Frank, "we trace
"Heaven's anger launched upon the guilty Jew...(9)
"See Titus' Arch!... that blind and impious crew
"Felt the revengeful sword, and unborn time
"Shall punish yet the apostate nation's crime.

XIX.

"The seal of God upon her brow we find,
"The everlasting scandal of mankind.
"Wide o'er the world we see her children roam,
"And, as we mark these exiles from a home,
"Their fate should warn us, their misfortune guide:
"Deaf to this voice, the Lombards in their pride,
"Leagued with false Greeks, beneath our ramparts dare
"Against the ark of Christ their banners rear.
"To guard the Church, to scourge her haughty foes,
"At God's command great Pepin's heir arose.

XX.

"Brave Franks, be grateful for the favour given,
"And tremble to forget your league with Heaven:
"Still let your sons embrace their God's defence,
"And firmly tread the path of innocence."
He spoke; and at his voice the soldiers feel
A sacred courage, and a new-born zeal:
As with that zeal their beating pulses glow,
They pant to fall upon the faithless foe.
Gonsalvo, gift by eager chiefs, arrests
His way; and thus controls their valiant breasts.

XXI.

"Behold, a friendly host around your own!
"Ye shall not enter on the field alone:
"Our chiefs and warriors to attend your way
"Wait but his sovereign voice whom we obey.
"Within the Flavian circus' ample space, (10)
"To join your bands will flock the Roman race,
"In Adrian's sight... the holy pastor there
"Shall bless your mutual standards for the war:
"The conquering lilies, and the sovereign keys,
"Shall march as Charles commands, as Heaven decrees."

XXII.

The Franks advance... beside them to the right
Maxentius' victor rears his arch to sight; (11)
His grateful country's record of the hour,
When now the Labarum, with hallowed power,
Confirmed the tyrant's glorious overthrow...
But soon the round arcades, in triple row,
By their strong outline, by their structure grand,
Excite the wonder of that warlike band:
Here, by the empurpled pontiff's will, they halt
Their march, received beneath the sounding vault.

XXIII.

Ye rulers of the globe, what high design
Bade you these mighty monuments combine?
What noble art, or festive pomp of joy,
Could in this space your Pagan crowds employ!
Here tigers, lions, urged their fierce career...
And Cæsar, fiercer than those lions, here
Raised his dread hand, the signal for their prey:
Martyrs in chains, on this their dying day,
Filled the sad echoes with their anguished cries;
And Rome grew wild with savage ecstacies.
Yes, glorious Rome! to whom the world was given,
Such were thy gods on earth, and such in heaven! (12)

XXIV.

Now thrice five altars, in the Pagan ring, (13)
Receive the vows that suppliant mortals bring . . .
. . While in these scenes, with standards fixed, the Franks
Await the Pontiff, and his friendly ranks,
Without the walls fresh fury they prepare . . .
Adalgise, conqueror of his secret care,
Quits the paternal tent, and roams beside
The mournful Tiber's yet ensanguined tide.
When at the hostile camp the hero waits,
A knight his message to the king relates.

XXV.

But Charles all access to his presence barred,
Trusting the task to zealous Eginhard:
"The Lombard's artifice succeeds no more,"
He cries, "his hold upon my heart is o'er.
"Bound is my sword to break his impious rod
"By that dread oath I vowed before my God.
"No peace between us! all his plots are vain . . .
"His guilt has fixed the limits of his reign.
"The suffering Church has felt his impious sway,
"And angry Heaven shall sweep his face away."

XXVI.

The youthful peer to meet Adalgise flies,
And views the glittering scarf with anxious eyes,
That Didier's son from fair Gisella's hands
Received . . . when soon they hoped the nuptial bands.
O'er the bright silk in gold and silver thread
Were wreaths of olive fancifully spread:
Gisella's artful toil the present wove,
And dearly cherished was the work of love.
Still, in the field where murderous legions cope,
The hero bears the pledge of parting hope.

XXVII.

As the Frank gazed, Gisella's image stole
In sad remembrance o'er his melting soul . . .
How could the friend revolve, without a sigh,
This faithful pair's unhappy destiny?
If fate is adverse to such noble chains,
How much more rigorous to his secret pains
That fate must prove, to his affection wild
For beauteous Emma, for a monarch's child?
Dark grows the future in the lover's sight . . .
For him will Charles forget his regal height?

XXVIII.

Likeness of love, and sympathy of grief,
To Didier's offspring doubly bound the chief.
In eager haste to meet the youth he prest,
And twice he caught him to a soldier's breast.
" My noble friend," with voice unknown to foes,
He cried, "beneath my tent accept repose,
" And hospitable care . . . so Charles has willed,
" By me the welcome charge must be fulfilled . . .
" Oh let one hour of happiness and peace
" Suspend our woes, our struggling hearts release!"

XXIX.

He speaks, and to his tent Adalgise guides:
Two young esquires, attendant at their sides,
Have seized the noble palfreys by the rein . . .
. . . The Frank has spoken; and his freedom plain
Destroys the hope of peace that Didier fed:
But shall the field be covered with the dead,
Robbed of their funeral rites, love's latest care?
The Frank, amid the slaughtered thousands there,
Counts many a friend . . ." I wish the truce," he said;
" And to the king your suit shall be conveyed.

XXX.

All shall be truly told; each peaceful word,
Each friendly promise, shall by Charles be heard:
May thy best hope be crowned at my return,
And thou, the wrongs of fortune cease to mourn.
But ah! what thousands, in this impious strife,
Of hapless Franks have forfeited their life,
'And asked in vain the honours of the dead...
'Didier on every side destruction spread;
'Heral's whole nation fell beneath the sword,
'And blood in torrents o'er Austrasia poured.

XXXI.

"The slaughtered priests before their altars die..."
The speaker meets Adalgise' mournful eye,
And parts in silence, and to Charles conveys
Whate'er the Lombard promises or prays.
Meanwhile across the plain full many a knight
Hastens to meet the well-known envoy's sight:
Gisella's lover to their hearts was dear;
The gay companion of their young career,
Oft, when his force was tried on festal days,
In Paris' self he won the wreath of praise.

XXXII.

All knew the pangs that wore away his heart,
And the fond grief of her, his better part;
While to the blest but hapless prince alone
The noble virgin's anguish was unknown.
When these, the partners of his youth, appeared,
Their looks, their voice, by memory endeared,
Awoke the thoughts of happier hours again...
He stands surrounded by their pitying train,
Received by turns on many a faithful breast;
And in his long-lost country seems to rest.

XXXIII.

Swift to the tent the circling soldiers bend,
And strive to recognize their noble friend:
Oft in their ranks the hero's deeds were told,
And how great Pepin honoured him of old.
Nation of warriors! generous to their foe,
With cry of triumph, and with kindred glow,
The Franks receive high energy and worth,
Spring where they will, and of whatever birth!
Meanwhile a courser, darting from the tower,
Comes on, enveloped in a dusty shower,
And shouts announce the chief's returning hour.

XXXIV.

The warlike clarion breathed its signal sound;
The well-known note dispersed the crowd around:
In haste the youthful paladins withdrew,
And bade the Lombard, one by one, adieu...
..." Prince!" said the chieftain, with a solemn voice,
" Eternal warfare is our monarch's choice,
" And changeless oath... two days alone he grants
" The truce, so precious to our mutual wants:
" When the third sun is born in light, again
" The fury of the sword shall sweep the plain."

XXXV.

These words the Lombard's ardent mind incense,
And ready to retort the hot offence
He stands... when sudden, to his troubled thought,
The Moorish fleet, and Didier's fraud, were brought.
Closing against all proffered peace his ears,
To foil his faithless foe the king appears:
Shame for his treacherous message fills the youth;
And, warmly kindling with the blush of truth,
He feels an instrument of guilty art,
And tears himself from Eginhard apart.

XXXVI.

His bosom labours with oppressive sighs...
" Lover of Emma, pardon me," he cries;
" Combats and dangers to my youth are dear;
" And for the wretched what has death to fear?
" By other thoughts my soul to earth is bowed:
" My cherished spouse (thou know'st I was allowed
" To call Gisella thus) by ruthless war
" Is snatched for ever from these eyes afar.
" Tell me her fate... has Heaven, in angry power,
" Struck to the ground this fair and spotless flower?"

XXXVII.

" The child of Pepin guards her love for thee,"
The Frank replies..." When now, too mournfully
" Thy royal sister felt misfortune's hour,
" Gisella hastened to Lutetia's tower.
" Before the throne, in trembling prayer, she falls;
" And now, within the cloister's holy walls,
" The veil of sorrow has o'erspread her brows,
" And Heaven is ready to receive her vows.
" God can alone Adalgise' place supply,
" And only thou canst win her from the sky."

XXXVIII.

His tears the listening soldier could not keep...
" Dear Eginhard," he cries, " thou see'st me weep;
" Thou know'st the torments and the charms of love,
" And how severe the fortune that I prove!
" Yes, to its weight my conquered head I bend,
" Sorrowing without a hope, without an end.
" When war, still war, forbade my nuptial tie,
" At once I saw my height of misery;
" And, since condemned with Pagan hordes to live,
" Doubly I feel that life has nought to give.

XXXIX.

"My friend, the appointed dawn shall wake the fight:
"Then may these wretched eyes be robbed of light!
"Farewell . . . unhappy son, unhappier still
"In love, Adalgise, perish when he will,
"Or here, or wandering on some distant coast;
"Crowned in the combat with the victor's boast,
"Or braving fortune's keenest injuries . . .
"Shall love Gisella to his latest sighs.
"But thee, my friend, may war's dread vengeance spare;
"And this last message to my mistress bear.

XL.

"Tell her . . . her loss has poisoned life's delight;
"That her pure image ever haunts my sight,
"And true and sacred to her noble chain
"No meaner passion shall my heart profane.
"Against our foes to lend my father aid,
"Beneath a foreign banner's fatal shade
"I seek the field . . . but honour still shall find
"Its ancient station in Adalgise' mind;
"And still, beyond the tomb, his name preserve
"Unaltered faith, and love that cannot swerve."

XLI.

He speaks, and turns his rapid course away:
The Lombard king in sorrow and dismay
Receives his son . . . rage, terror, fill his breast . . .
The viewless arm that on the Druid prest,
Now seems suspended o'er his impious head . . .
His homicidal chiefs to council dread
He calls . . . Fierce Rodmir from the Tiber's side
Appears; and Didier, with the front of pride,
Struggling a dauntless spirit to present,
Thus hails the hero, entering on his tent.

XLII.

" He grants the truce! the favour of a day!
" And then . . . eternal war! . . . my friends, obey
" My ardent wish; and when the night descends,
" Bear death into his camp, my gallant friends!
" If Charles avoided to behold my son,
" I hail his prudence; it was wisely done:
" Here the sure presage of success I see . . .
" In every eye his tarnished dignity
" Has sunk; and, wounded 'mid his mighty peers,
" He saves his life by shameful flight and fears.

XLIII.

" The very truce he grants his weakness shows;
" His troops, himself, are eager for repose.
" His slaughtered soldiers with a tomb to grace,
" He had not checked his hatred for our race.
" My offers searched the windings of his soul:
" Doubtless he hopes new succours to enroll
" In his proud host; for Rome, with joyful eye,
" Has seen his standard o'er the Tiber fly:
" Soon, at his call reviving, will she dare
" To quit her walls, and harass us with war.

XLIV.

" A longer truce, perchance, had soothed our mind
" With gales more prosperous, and with seas more kind.
" But since alone we must decide the fray,
" In every hour there's danger from delay.
" We wait the Moorish armament in vain:
" Conquest shall crown our unassisted train,
" And turn aside the threatening storm of woe . . .
" At the third watch be ready for the foe;
" At once a hundred different courses take,
" And 'mid his dying host let Charles awake!

XLV.

"Oh fight, as yesterday ye fought, my friends,
"And certain victory your path attends.
"Charles has decreed our ruin . . .'tis a dream
"To talk of faith, when peril is extreme . . .
"Suppress, my son, that vain and coward thought!
"Conquest, or death, before us here are brought,
"And, as we will, we strike the balance down.
"Promise your troops the plunder of the town . . .
"But aim, my friends, oh aim, above the rest,
"At every Paladin's devoted breast:
"So may this night of blood exalt the brave,
"And Charles, and Rome, and France, unite their grave!"

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXIV.

THE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH DAY; THE FOLLOWING NIGHT; AND THE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH DAY.

Translated by the Rev. Francis Hodgson.

ARGUMENT.

Arrival of Isolier at Rome. End of the civil war in Aquitania. The camp of Charlemagne surprised; battle in the night; succour from Heaven; victory, triumph.

CHARLEMAGNE.

CANTO XXIV.

I.

THROUGHOUT their camp the Franks the truce proclaim:
Ere yet the sun had lent his noonday flame,
The holy brass around a simple shrine
By royal order bids the host combine.
The funeral pomp they mournfully prepare:
Tears, and regret, and many a tender care,
And faithful friendship's recollected joy,
The solemn moments of this day employ.
Clermont, the Montmors, many a chief, are laid
In rocky beds beneath the turret's shade.

II.

The host is closing now its pious pains,
When sounds a horn across the distant plains:
The shrill vibrations o'er the river sail,
And rouse the echoes of each circling vale.
From the north hills the whirling dust is poured,
And from its bosom shines a flashing sword,
Bright as some star surrounded by a cloud ...
Down the descent a steed advances loud;
And, as an arrow swift, they see appear
From fair Narbonne a conquering cavalier.

III.

'Tis he, Laurentia's guardian, Ciruos' knight,
The friend of Carloman, renowned in fight:
Along the waves of mournful Franks he goes,
And joy and kindling hope around him throws.
His numerous comrades on his courser press . . .
"God, Charles, and France!" . . . these accents of success
Announce the ruin of the Moor, and fly
From rank to rank with gathering energy.
The soldier in his tent repeats them yet,
And exultation rises o'er regret.

IV.

The clamour strikes the Christian monarch's ears;
Before him swift the Paladin appears:
"The Queen is in Narbonne; and France disdains
"The shameful burthen of Iberian chains:
"Beneath our blows the rebels yield their life:
"Austrasia's children, fired by lawless strife,
"Now breathe on Gaiffre and the Moor their hate:
"Thy brother's widow, unappalled by fate,
"Comes to restore thy troubled realm to peace...
"She, she alone, has made contention cease."

V.

"Lord of mankind! One, everlasting God!
"My fondest wish," said Charles, "thou hast bestowed:
"Thus to my vows my sister, nephews given,
"Bid me repair my wrongs to them and Heaven.
"Yes, sons of Carloman, this happy hour,
"Would I could bind the glittering wreath of power
"Around your kindred brows, to me unknown,
"And clasp your injured bosoms to my own!
"By me before the holy threshold led,
"Exiles august, should bend your regal head!"

VI.

Sire," said Isolier, " to Austrasia's kings
My voice announced your generous offerings:
Their mother thanks you . . . blest enough is she,
In foiling thus the Pagan's treachery;
And shrinks from royalty's illustrious toil:
But late, anointed with the priestly oil,
Her sons' career the pontiff has designed,
And Heaven has ratified their holy mind:
Thus, consecrate to cares above the earth,
They yield the rightful honours of their birth."

VII.

'hen, by what chance, the chief proceeds to say,
'he shipwrecked queen had reached Hamilcar's bay,
'hat fatal morn, when now her anxious eyes
n mist beheld her native shore arise.
Text, how, combining rigour with deceit,
'he foe of Heaven had drawn Laurentia's feet
'o Aquitania's fields, and how alone,
n shades of night, through desert wastes unknown,
'o noble Melaric's domain she fared,
\nd saved her children whom the Moor ensnared.

VIII.

Thus he pursues . . ." From Montfort's walls I went,
' In haste to execute thy high intent:
' I fed the pleasing promise, that the queen
' Secure already in Provence was seen:
' But aged Mainfroi's breast was deeply stirred
' With joy, when thy returning love he heard
' For the poor wanderers of his noble name . . .
' The barks of Ostia from the winds we claim;
' And, gathered on the coast, as duty moved,
" Waits a fond nation for the Queen they loved.

IX.

" Few days had flown, ere distant rumour bore
" Rebellion's arms and counsels to the shore:
" The royal youths enthroned in old Bordeaux,
" And the fierce inroad of the Moorish foe.
" The tale o'erwhelmed me with distress and fear;
" But Mainfroi's accents in my gladdened ear
" Inspired new hope ... 'My guiltless race,' he cried,
" ' Is wronged, Isolier, by these deeds of pride:
" ' Laurentia's name and virtues are profaned,
" ' And by the Moor her suffering sons constrained.

X.

" ' At Adrian's voice, to fly his Lombard foes,
" ' But late they left the asylum of repose.
" ' Leagued with the Moor! impossible! Oh haste,
" ' And near them soon with guardian zeal be placed,
" ' Fly, in the name of Heaven, to fair Narbonne ...
" ' Alas! the vigour of these limbs is gone;
" ' Vainly I languish to partake thy path:
" ' But thou, my friend, give action to my wrath;
" ' Rush to the camp; their princely fame secure,
" ' And snatch his victims from the treacherous Moor.

XI.

" He spoke; impatient to fulfil his view,
" On active courser o'er his realm I flew:
" To Aquitania's bounds I turned my reins,
" And traversed Nîme's and Béziere's fruitful plains. (1)
" Ere the fourth day I reached Narbonne ... around
" On Aude's fair bank the embattled host I found, (2)
" Led by Orinda and her lord: his power
" Geilon, meanwhile, to high Montalban's tower
" Conquering had bent: on every side, report
" Spread the fresh sorrows of Laurentia's court.

XII.

"Wakening his host to slighted duty's sense,
"Geilon deserved thy noble confidence:
"E'en to Bordeaux his secret power extends,
"And makes mistaken foes again thy friends.
"Hoping to shut the Moor within the walls,
"Forth from their native rocks Alphonso calls
"His free Asturians to the fields of France...
"The glorious work seems bravely to advance:
"Vengeance has caught the traitor in his toil,
"And threats the foul invader of our soil.

XIII.

"Straight to Toulouse, as Geilon's voice commands,
"Forth from Narbonne we lead our willing bands:
"The generous Montclar and his warlike fair
"Beneath my standard for the war prepare:
"When from Lavaur's wide plain at once arise (3)
"A thousand shouts that agitate the skies:
"Lo! twice ten fugitives the hills descend,
"And, wide with terror, to our banners bend...
"Those friendly banners have dispelled their dread;
"And one, advancing, thus his purpose said:

XIV.

"'Vassals of noble Melaric we come:
"'Marching six days from Sere, our honoured home,
"'The royal youths were circled by his ranks...
"'But when they reached the Save's unhappy banks, (4)
"'Almanzor's hordes upon the plain were seen...
"'In two divided bands, to save the Queen,
"'The valiant Melaric arrayed his horse:
"'Feeling the contest vain with such a force,
"'To high Montalban's tower himself conveyed
"'The youths, and trusted to that single aid.

XV.

" ' While through the forests of that fatal shore
" ' Our flying chief his precious charges bore,
" ' We meet the fury of Almanzor's band,
" ' And long in arms the unequal war withstand.
" ' Their faulchions rob near all our host of breath ...
" ' Happy, too happy in their glorious death,
" ' If they ensure the safety of their kings!
" ' But Galffre to the fight the Paynim brings,
" ' Gaiffre, whom shame and thirst of blood inspire,
" ' And hatred for the youths' illustrious sire.'

XVI.

" Thus spoke the friend of Melaric... what breast
" Could hear unmoved the sorrows he exprest?
" Alas! one lengthened, one laborious day
" From Clermont's castle yet divides our way!
" To fly these noble victims to defend,
" With shouts unanimous the chiefs contend:
" At once the signal for the march is given,
" And through the night our rapid course is driven.
" The ray of morning to our eager eyes
" Showed where, remote, the wished-for towers arise.

XVII.

" Peopled with dying and with dead afar,
" Too soon we trace the region of the war:
" Such ravaged plains through all our march appear,
" Strewed with fresh victims of the ruthless spear.
" Christians and Pagans, bathed in mutual gore,
" Speak the tremendous fight but lately o'er..
" Through the red furrows of the field we go,
" Shuddering lest yet the bleeding heaps may show
" A dearer corse than all who lie around,
" The Queen, or royal infants, on the ground!

XVIII.

" This new alarm struck ice upon the heart:
" We searched the spacious plain through every part,
" In pensive, melancholy, mute career . . .
" At length our labour has dispelled our fear:
" Amid these lifeless sufferers in the fight,
" A banner, richly graced, revealed to sight
" The faithless Gaiffre's colours, and beside
" Two felon chieftains from their wounds had died.
" Doubtless the Frank was victor here, and broke
" Rebellion's pride beneath his loyal yoke.

XIX.

" Montalban then gives shelter to our kings! (5)
" This happy presage in our bosom springs:
" To climb the southern rocks without delay,
" The rocks that veil the town, we bent our way
" Amid the night of woods . . . Beneath the shade
" The giant body of a chief was laid,
" That struck our eyes . . . the helm with lilies spread,
" The well-known arms a brilliant lustre shed . . .
" 'Tis he! 'tis Clovis' heir, before us dead!

XX.

" Gaiffre himself, inanimate, was here . . .
" A broken lance, two breathless coursers near,
" And shields in glittering fragments strike our eyes . . .
" One from our fugitives in terror flies,
" And lifts a blood-stained buckler from the ground . . .
" Gazing he stands, then thus, with piteous sound:
" ' 'Tis o'er! brave Melaric has closed his days!
" ' His arms, his slaughtered courser, meet my gaze.
" ' Here, in this desert vale, no friend to save,
" ' My gallant master found a cruel grave.'

XXI.

" These mournful accents waken all our dread;
" Trembling we view the scene around us spread:
" Blood points our route; and signs of slaughter trace
" Our onward passage to a narrow space
" That larch and sombre fir with shade embrown:
" The grass, by wavering footsteps trodden down
" Beneath the tufted trees, augments our speed...
" Led by this fearful vestige we proceed,
" Till in the bosom of the vale we found
" An aged man, stretched senseless on the ground.

XXII.

" Nearer we move in horror and despair:
" Deep streams of blood had stained his snowy hair;
" His helm, and shattered arms that round him lay,
" Spoke how severe and stubborn was the fray.
" His naked head, his visage turned to Heaven,
" With many a ghastly wound his bosom riven,
" To all our pensive company afford
" Too painful traces of the rebel sword.
" We saw, we knew, true honour's model there,
" The stranger's friend, the Paladin of Sere.

XXIII.

" The spouse of Montclar leaps upon the ground,
" And we the unhappy conqueror surround.
" Within his arms, concealed, upon his heart,
" Lay a young boy!... Yet, with his broken dart,
" That aged warrior seems to brave the foe...
" We filled the forest with our cries of woe,
" One of our kings was here!... His humble vest,
" His peasant cap that carefully represt
" His long fair locks, his semblance rude and poor,
" Could not conceal him from the ruthless Moor.

XXIV.

Orinda raised his form, and with her breath
Aroused young Pepin from his sleep of death . . .
What hand unmerciful, what horrid rage
Cropped, with inhuman sword, thy tender age?
Tears to his moistened eyelids swell, and now
When limpid streams are dashed upon his brow,
He wakes to life . . . he opes a timid eye . . .
Though hot with anger, and ambition high,
The felon Gaiffre, in that deed of shame,
Failed to complete his regicidal aim.

XXV.

'' Doubtless, the assassin, in his daring chilled,
'' Shook the foul steel, nor drove it as he willed:
'' Wide from the mark the savage point was prest,
'' And hardly grazed the surface of the chest.
'' Pepin regains his sense . . . he views our bands,
'' And thinks the murderous host before him stands . . .
'' Hiding his beauteous visage with his hands,
'' The form of Gaiffre still besets his eyes,
'' And Melaric's loved name aloud he cries!

XXVI.

'' At that dear voice, the brave old chief of France
'' Arises slowly from his mortal trance,
'' Against us shakes the fragment of his spear,
'' And casts a dying look of love and fear
'' On his young prince . . . then back his fainting head
'' Declines . . . and, 'Save, as Heaven 's your hope,' he said,
'' 'O save the Kings!' . . . We circle him in vain . . .
'' And Pepin, with a voice assured again,
'' Calls from his deadly rest the champion brave . . .
'' He slumbers in the darkness of the grave.

XXVII.

" On the cold earth the boy beside him lies,
" Bathes with fond tears, and 'mid his bursting sigh
" His feeble accents thus our aid implore,
" ' Friends! is there time? Ah, yet my sire restore!
" ' 'Tis Melaric! 'tis he who broke our chains...
" ' When now our steps had past those desert plains
" ' He led our flight, he lessened our alarms...
" ' My mother bore Siagre in her arms,
" ' When Aquitania's duke and warlike suite
" ' O'ertook us at yon mountain's lone retreat.

XXVIII.

" ' Amid the rebel's ranks my trembling sight
" ' Beheld the Moor... divided in the fight
" ' Far from my mother, I was carried here,
" ' To this deep valley, by that champion dear.
" ' Gaiffre pursued us, thirsting for our blood;
" ' But in his path my brave defender stood,
" ' And robbed the faithless chieftain of his life...
" ' Then sank himself, exhausted in the strife:
" ' For me, for me, the traitor's blows he bore...
" ' Friends! is there time? Ah, yet my sire restore!'

XXIX.

" Our tears return the royal infant's grief:
" We raise the body of the noble chief;
" On the crossed branches of an ancient pine,
" Girt by his arms, the soldier we recline.
" The spouse of Montclar, in her fond distress,
" Could not resign the boy... with close caress
" She folds him in her arms, and quits her spear...
" To Aymon's rock we bent our slow career:
" We meet Laurentia as the wood we leave,
" Blest from her friend her infant to receive.

XXX.

' The Queen was quick returning to the fight...
' Siagre now was safe ... in wild affright
' For this her younger treasure's menaced life,
' She urged her way, and sought again the strife.
' Never before her feeble hands had reared
' The sword and shield; now first the war she dared:
' Around her Clermont's vassals promptly move;
' In sacred transports of maternal love,
" Herself to day all danger will disdain,
" And snatch her offspring from that miscreant train.

XXXI.

" The brave old soldier on his rustic bier
" Arrests the mother's joy; and many a tear
" On the pale visage of the hero falls...
" We reach at length the hospitable walls,
" And Aymon, if his son, his glorious son, (6)
" His Richard had returned from battles won,
" To bless his venerable father's sight,
" Had felt his bosom throb with less delight.
" The marble vault, where great Rinaldo lay,
" Received the kindred warrior's honoured clay.
" There rests the Paladin of Sere ... and well
" He earned the tomb, who for his monarch fell.

XXXII.

" Thus were Austrasia's kings preserved ... their feet
" Brave Montclar guided to his ducal seat:
" There, at the shrine, their crowns they both depose:
" Laurentia thus defeats her fraudful foes:
" Swift to Pyrene's height the Moors retrace
" Their fruitless path; and Aquitania's race,
" Touched with remorse, return to thy command:
" Slain is Theodebert ... in lawless band
" The people rose, and punished at Bigan
" The chief who wronged the sons of Carloman.
" Thus, freed at length from tumult and intrigue,
" Triumphant France dispels the foreign league."

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"The people rose, and punished at Bigan
"The chief who wronged the sons of Carloman.
[redacted]freed at [redacted]lt and intrigue,
[redacted]reign league."

XXXIII.

Isolier thus Austrasia's troubles told,
And how they closed, by happier fate controlled.
Charles feels the blessing of a sudden peace:
His nephews freed, and discord made to cease,
Are grateful pledges of the aid of Heaven...
"Three days," he cried, "and but three days, are giv
"To him, the Church's foe! till then he reigns,
"Till then his host the holy town profanes...
"Our sacred labour shall be then complete,
"And Greek and Lombard fall beneath our feet."

XXXIV.

He speaks; and sorrows for this brief delay:
Isolier joins the impatient host's array;
Ranier and Isambard receive the peer...
Hope, at his voice, revives their drooping cheer:
The day of conquest now appointed seems,
And glory brightens in their happy dreams.
To their own roofs in triumph they return,
And their touched hearts with pictured pleasure burn.
Led by their king, with verdant laurels crowned,
Proudly along the banks of Seine they wound.

XXXV.

Few, few shall realize the dream of pride!
Oh dreadful night! these battlements beside
What host of heroes shalt thou doom to death!
Inspiring Hope, meanwhile, with balmy breath
Lulls all the peers, and charms their cares away...
Descending from the hills, and chasing day,
The shadows grew: the monarch of the Franks,
The Christain chieftains, and their warlike ranks,
In dewy slumber sink beneath the gloom,
While a perfidious king prepares their doom.

XXXVI.

Of the third watch the signal floats around... (7)
Piercing the darkness fatal and profound,
The moon by slow degrees diffused her light:
From that imperial mole's exalted height,
On the shrill brass the perjured hour is told...
Dead murmurs, like the gathering wind, are rolled
Throughout the ranks... the trumpet's voice is still..
Didier in silence to the deed of ill
Directs the march ... and suddenly his foes
See his unnumbered troops their lines enclose.

XXXVII.

The Tiber's bank fierce Rodmir re-ascends,
And o'er the stream by Quintus' tower he bends. (8)
The wintry torrent, bursting o'er the plains,
From their crushed roofs expels the flying swains...
Amid the fleet the furious tempest sweeps,
And the pale dead are scattered o'er the deeps...
So on the Franks impetuous Rodmir leaps,
And dread Armelia, brandishing her spear,
Pursues his fatal path, and scorns the thought of fear.

XXXVIII.

She pants to glut herself with blood, and stand
On the fallen shrines sustained by Charles's hand:
In ruined Rome her vengeance is complete;
There, while the ramparts smoke beneath her feet,
To grace her second nuptials, she aspires
To glorious triumph... with infernal fires
The murderous idol has her soul possest...
Worthy at last the God whom she confest,
Her aspect flashes with a horror wild...
Her very sire no longer knows his child.

XXXIX.

Fatal delirium of that guilty fair,
Who fortune's adverse pressure could not bear!
Deep-wounded pride, and rage beyond control,
Held from that hour all empire o'er her soul.
Slaughter, and cries of anguish and affright,
Now only seem her bosom to delight.
Upon their startled foes, most fierce of all,
This undivided pair together fall;
And twice ten warriors by their hands are slain...
The courage of the peers, their voice, in vain
Back to their standards called the flying train.

XL.

The Franks, tumultuous, from the battle's brunt
Press to the tower, and there extend in front
Their mighty mass, around their guardian king...
Thus when the hunter's unexpected spring
Alarms the lion's whelps, they first retire,
Spite of their daring, to their cherished sire...
Ajaccio's chieftain rallies to the fight
A numerous band; on Marius' mountain height
He flies to meet the storm... thence Didier poured
His rage, and swelled the carnage with his sword.

XLI.

Isolier rushed on Theodosius' path:
This Greek, when Ezelin's impetuous wrath
Sank in the grave, supplied his exarch's place,
And ruled for Longin that obedient race.
Unhappy Greek! he meets Isolier's rage...
With such a foe too feeble to engage,
He feels the dart, that through his helmet prest;
The spouting blood discolours all the crest:
Shuddering he bends beneath the fierce attack,
And strikes with falling head his courser's back.

XLII.

The steel, yet smoking with Byzantine gore,
'Mid the false host again resistless bore.
Brave Eginhard with equal fury glows,
And like success his martial vigour shows.
The Greeks recoil, confounded, to the walls:
But Didier's rallying voice to battle calls
Their docile troop . . . impatient to delay
The youthful warrior in his onward way,
Full on his shield he hurls the javelin dread . . .
Again . . . the breastplate flows with streams of red.

XLIII.

The knight against the monarch lifts his lance . . .
Adalgise sees, and rushes in advance,
To guard his sire: o'erwhelmed with wild alarms,
Like lightning dashed between their rival arms,
Awful he stands, and keeps the foes apart . . .
The quivering ash of his extended dart
Arrests the weapon of the Frank . . . again
He strikes; and Eginhard resists in vain . . .
Thus, from the thunderbolt's tremendous shock,
Down the loud valley rolls the uprooted rock.

XLIV.

Thrown in the dust the bleeding chieftain lies:
His faithful band of friends around him flies,
And, pleased, the conqueror leaves so dear a foe . . .
Shuddering himself beneath that rival's blow,
On to the stream he hastes, where Didier led . . .
Before their steps the dying and the dead
Cover the bank: too slow to reach the tower
Thousands have felt their formidable power,
While Rodmir lends new horror to the hour.

XLV.

The youth is led to Belisarius' walls;
Death's pallid hue upon his forehead falls:
In deep and silent thought the royal chief
Controls the tumult of his bitter grief:
He marks their station out to all his train...
Fate's cruel arrow threatens thee in vain,
Thou noble Eginhard! thy wound shall aid
Thine heart's desire, and nobly be repaid:
Thy blood cements the kindness of thy lord...
To Emma's love thy life shall be restored!

XLVI.

The clarion's voice recalls the Christian power,
And lengthening echo answers from the tower.
Gonsalvo, Montmor, filled with equal fire,
Bid the blest Cross o'er Adrian's mole aspire.
Down the vast ramparts rising flames are spread,
And light the battle field with dusky red...
Darkling no more, nor silent, is the plain:
A crash of terror through each Roman fane
Peals from the sacred bronze, and wide around
Repeats the tocsin's melancholy sound.

XLVII.

Rodmir and Didier, sweeping through the fight,
In the mid camp their numerous lines unite.
"Friend!" said the king, "like herds of timid deer
"These famous Franks are scattered by our spear;
"And Pepin's son yet lingers to appear!
"Blest was the flight of Ormez' vengeful dart;
"Doubtless his wound has chilled the monarch's heart.
"Forward, oh forward! with resistless sway,
"And whelm the mighty victor in our way."

XLVIII.

To Tiber's bank at once the warriors spring:
The Franks in phalanx form before their king;
Close to the walls the foot, the horse afar,
As he commands, each squadron meets the war.
Defence their only aim, the silent lines,
Converging, close; and shield with shield combines.
Kindling a rival flame from man to man,
Each peer is duly stationed in the van:
Thus the strong turrets, that the bulwarks crown,
Protect those bulwarks, and the trembling town.

XLIX.

Thus rise the Paladins, from space to space...
"Look close your shields, be rooted to your place!"
They spoke; and echoed by the leading Franks
The rapid order runs through all the ranks.
But Charles no more before his army stands...
Vainly impetuous to rejoin his bands,
He grasps his armour; and is forced at length
To feel his courage far outstrip his strength.
Swift from his wound the streams of crimson flow,
And check the mighty chief's heroic glow.

L.

Unarmed, but urging on his fiery horse,
He spreads new firmness through the Christian force;
And dares almost arraign the Almighty sway,
That keeps his presence from the dangerous fray.
But his harmonious plan directs the host...
Lit by the light of mind, at every post,
Within the walls, without, his glances know
The march, and plot, and purpose of the foe:
His eye is all in all; with restless care
He strives to baffle yet the treacherous snare.

LI.

Near him, meanwhile, the conquering hordes advance,
And fall with all their weight on gathered France:
Before the hills, beneath the tower, they rise
In arms, and loud and louder are their cries.
Albion darts forth . . . to meet his foaming steed
Ranier and Isambard with rival speed
Rush on in front, their troop's approach to guard . . .
Martel's proud helm on valiant Isambard
Struck Albion's eyes . . . this token of his shame
Glared high, and set his savage heart on flame.

LII.

At Isambard alone he aims the blow:
His iron lance is brandished o'er his foe;
Plunged from on high the ruthless weapon broke
The shoulder's plaited mail, and, hot with smoke
And blood, came issuing from the fatal wound . . .
So in the limpid wave with hissing sound
Shoots the red brand . . . The conqueror tore away
His helmet from the dying as he lay;
When Ranier, bent beneath his lifted axe,
With sudden onset Albion's breast attacks . . .
The wary Saxon turns with rapid wheel,
And on his arm receives the biting steel.

LIII.

He springs on Ranier; when, to meet his force,
The valiant Heptarch spurs his ardent horse . . .
"Assassin of the Britons! turn on me!"
Albion, well-pleased his royal foe to see,
Exclaims . . . "In youth, and in our earliest fight,
"Thou could'st not struggle with this arm of might,
"Nor check the course of my adventurous spear . . .
"Now learn its fuller energy to fear!
"The work that Thames began shall Tiber end,
"Go, join the shadow of thy fallen friend!

LIV.

" Your realms shall know by Albion's hand you fell;
" His valour, doubtless, they remember well:
" Glutted with rapine and with glory there,
" His iron yoke he made your people bear.
" More dreadful yet, and fatal to his foes,
" While seven collected kings in vain oppose,
" Ruin and death shall Albion's vengeance trace
" Through all your land ...Apostates! ye embrace
" The faith of France! ... Our God, to scourge your sins,
" Thus with your prince his punishment begins."

LV.

Driven at each other's breast with wrathful speed
The rivals rush ... each high and haughty steed
Whelmed by the shock, one moment and no more
Recoils .. then both, impetuous as before,
Leap, rough with rage, and panting from the land ...
Obeying thus some artful workman's hand,
Spring forth at once two fountains to the skies ...
Wounded by turns the desperate enemies
Prolong the fight; till Egbert's happier spear
Has closed the savage Saxon's dread career.

LVI.

The warrior's fall incenses Ranier's heart,
That Egbert robs him of so brave a part.
This youthful Neustrian, blind in zeal, will dare
Alone confront the Lombard king in war.
He bends on Didier ... in his father's train
Adalgise follows, eager to sustain
The approaching Frank ... unchecked by his advance,
The Frank on Didier only lifts his lance ...
The king collects his vigour for the blow,
And lays with ponderous axe his rash assailant low.

LVII.

Beneath the hoary king the chieftain lies...
In boundless rage the exulting Lombards rise;
Against the brazen pikes in crowds they go,
And strive to burst the phalanx of the foe.
The shouts of Rodmir cheer their bloody path...
Before that awful couple in their wrath
The dying Franks have strown the mournful plain:
Soldiers, or knights, they lay confus'dly slain;
And, rolled in ghastly slaughter o'er the sand,
Opened a passage to the Saxon band.

LVIII.

Wave follows wave upon the sounding coast:
So, filled with courage firm, the Christian host
Dispute the station of their friends who die...
Scarce are they reaped by cruel destiny,
When now already to their fatal place
New lines succeed... the insatiate Paynim race
Sweep off by turns our numerous ranks, and spread
O'er earth, at every step, fresh heaps of dead;
While conquering Rodmir, with resistless force,
Through gasping thousands swept his dreadful course.

LIX.

Armelia turns her eyes, that fiercely shine,
On young Adolphus, of that hateful line
Which Heral, Adelinde, adorned... he wore
The brilliant broom, and onward as he bore
To head the Franks, the Queen with furious sight
Saw, and outstripped her partner in the fight...
Swift as the vollied lightning, on she prest,
And plunged her weapon in the Suevian's breast:
That plunge impetuous broke the steely dart;
But the point quivered in the warrior's heart.

LX.

The Saxon chief approached the foaming tide,
And called on Charles... his accents far and wide
In menace fierce are echoed through the air...
"Monarch, come forth! behold, in pale despair
"Thy peers are scattered; for thy presence pray...
"Even to thyself my sword shall cut its way,
"Amid thy dying host... no longer hope
"To fly this arm, but with it fairly cope!
"Hid behind ranks and countless ranks in vain,
"Here, here, shall vengeance close thy boasted reign!"

LXI.

Ogier and Egbert hear the menace loud:
Indignant, raging, through the warlike crowd
At once they rush... the Danish chieftain first
On Witikind's great son in fury burst...
"Madman!..., But, oh! that Heaven would grant thy vow,
"And bring our matchless prince before thee now,
"Bright in his glorious arms! full oft thine horde
"Has felt the weight of that o'erwhelming sword!
"And, scattering now thy barbarous ranks afar,
"Soon would it still thy tumult in the war."

LXII.

He speaks; and aims at valiant Rodmir's heart;
But the strong breastplate has repelled the dart
With heavy sound... in vain the infuriate peer
Strikes the thick cuisses with his glancing spear:
Shivering in fragments flies the faithless steel...
Condemned the power of adverse fate to feel,
The intrepid warrior sinks upon the land,
Whelmed by the force of Rodmir's conquering brand:
But, like a wounded lion, in despair
Rises again from earth, and rends the echoing air.

LXIII.

He quits his powerless arms and panting steed,
And springs upon his foe with fiery speed;
And pressing on, and prompt to grasp him round,
Struggles to drag him to the gory ground.
Fruitless attempt! the northern hero stands
Unhurt, unshaken, by his hostile hands;
Freed from his hold, recoils, then plunging back
Whirls down his iron mace with dread attack...
Low falls the expiring Dane; night veils his eyes;
And rolled in dust by trampling steeds he lies.

LXIV.

Rallying his fresh battalions to the fight,
Hot with fatigue and blood, still Cirnos' knight
Arrests the war: so yet some single mole
Resists the impetuous waters as they roll:
On every side the aspiring flood in vain
Levels its banks, and inundates the plain;
Mining, without repose, in wild career,
The deep foundations of the solid pier:
So stands Isolier yet against his foes,
While rough with javelins all his armour shows.

LXV.

On Pavia's tyrant now he turns his eyes,
Roused by the sound of his exulting cries...
Piercing the ranks he seeks the monarch's place,
And meets that proud apostate face to face.
"Royal deserter of the cause of Heaven,
"To these red hands Martel's good sword is given,
"Scourge of thy race!" Impetuous, as he spoke,
Full on the Lombard king his fury broke:
The watchful king declines, avoids the blow,
And summons all his strength to meet the foe.

LXVI.

In vain . . . his blood twice issues in the fray,
And the Frank presses on his mighty prey.
Affrighted Pagan crowds around him spring,
And countless knights are gathered to their king.
The peer, o'ermatched, arrests his onward course . . .
But, entering soon again the hostile force,
Distained with Lombard blood, his station takes,
And in the midst his dauntless weapon shakes.
Two piercing darts the hero's side have scarred . . .
But nothing now his onset can retard.

LXVII.

" Die for the church! or win this bloody field!
" Christains, stand close! and look each spear and shield!"
Palure, Hercinus, Italus, advance,
Together met by brave Adalgise' lance:
Esquires of Cirnos' chief, well tried in worth,
Ajaccio's borders gave the three their birth.
On the three youths the Lombard's warlike fire
Is turned, impatient to avenge his sire.

LXVIII.

The true Cirnesians intercept his path . . .
But on Palure's high helmet in his wrath
He strikes, and reddening from the forehead run
The streams of gore: well nigh the deed was done,
When to the youth's defence Isolier flew,
And, hot for vengeance, on Adalgise threw
His weightier spear . . . The formidable dart
Glanced from its aim, and lodged in Amar's heart:
Amar, brave warrior, knight of feudal fame,
Who from great Alboin drew his noble name.

LXIX.

Meanwhile Isolier's fainting strength declines:
Rodmir, Adalgise, join their martial lines:
Back they returned the mutual shouts of pride,
Broke through the Franks, and in their fury vied.
A frightful space on either flank was made:
Charles, with a melancholy look, surveyed...
Within the sacred walls the promised aid
Deceives his hopes, and Montmor lingers still:
All seems the Lombard treason to fulfil.
With strange alarm his manly soul is riven
And lifts an eye of agony to Heaven.

LXX.

"Canst thou, Director of the Fight! repeal
"Thine holy promise of thy people's weal?
"No! in thy voice the Lombard's fall we heard,
"And doomed the Pagan from thy righteous word...
"But now, behold! their impious league prevails,
"And all my force in feeble languor fails.
"Great God! thy breath can with a thought restore
"The vigour that thy servant felt before.
"To thee I yield my body and my soul,
"Dispose, at thy good pleasure, of the whole.
"Weak, without arms, to head my peers I go...
"Pronounce, great God! between me and the foe."

LXXI.

He spoke... and to the ranks, where carnage grew,
Eager, at once, the Christian monarch flew.
No shield, no arms, defend his weakened frame,
But courage, zeal, and faith, his heart inflame.
—A radiant cloud, a glorious veil of light
Bursts out immediate on his dazzled sight!
His wound a viewless aspiration heals...
The monarch shouts! the touch divine he feels...
While, raised above the energies of man,
An unknown vigour through his bosom ran...

LXXII.

" King of the Franks!" exclaimed the heavenly voice,
" Thine is the recompense of faith! rejoice!
" God to its end his promised vengeance brings...
" See, COMBAT, TRIUMPH, FOR THE KING OF KINGS."
Asunder torn at this tremendous sound,
The cloud discovers, from its breast profound,
War's dread Archangel, in the azure field
Of air, outstretched on high... a monstrous shield
On his left arm the holy town o'erspread,
And his vast spear waved o'er the Pagan's head.

LXXIII.

Even from the sacred ramparts to the hills
The sky that buckler's brilliant circle fills.
In words of fire, upon the brazen plain,
Shine "CYRUS, CONSTANTINE, AND ... CHARLEMAGNE!"
The gazing monarch, rapt in holy trance,
Seizes his sword, springs forward in advance,
And cheers the Christian host... celestial awe
O'erwhelmed the shuddering Pagans as they saw...
An universal horror and despair...
On his pale brow rose Rodmir's bristling hair!
His soldiers fly... he calls them to the fight...
Trembles himself, and, trembling, turns to flight.

LXXIV.

In their blind fear, within the ramparts' shade,
Didier and Rodmir vainly hope for aid:
They pass the sacred gate, in wild alarms,
And Montmor there encounters them in arms.
By the freed river spread his numerous ranks...
There fire and slaughter stained the mournful banks
Beneath the barbarous host... the sacred fane
There sank, dishonoured by that guilty train:
In the same spot their crimes they now atone,
And 'mid those smoking ruins are o'erthrown.

LXXV.

Retreat was closed ... entangled in their net
They fell ... and vainly to the battle yet
Called their fierce chiefs ... the broken squadrons fled,
And, down the crimson tide, the heaps of dead,
Mixed with their steeds, in ghastly slaughter rolled...
The Latin bands, with fury uncontrolled,
Plunged in the foaming wave ... The sacred walls,
Whose host no more their haughty foe appals,
Poured to the stream an unexhausted throng,
Driven by hot zeal and vengeful wrath along.

LXXVI.

Lilies and eagles bathe in blood ... one day
Avenges Rome, and wipes her tears away...
Irmensul's rage no more his host inspired ...
He saw the Almighty's angel ... and retired.—
Gonsalvo mounts St. Peter's ruined height;
And there those glorious standards float in air,
The triple crown, the keys, the cross, that bear...
All who revere that sign its mercy share:
The pontiff's accents, in his Saviour's name,
Life to the foe, and liberty proclaim.

LXXVII.

Rodmir beholds the triple crown ... again
He feels a glowing rage in every vein.
The crowd of Rome before his fiery wrath
Bows down anew, or flies his fatal path.
Gonsalvo waits him near the sacred shrines ...
With furious shout along the scattering lines
The savage hero hastes, and darts his spear...
Gonsalvo turns him from its fierce career,
In vain ... he lifts the sign of mercy high,
But 'mid the ruined fane is doomed to die.

LXXVIII.

Here last e son of Witikind shall show
His matchless vigour on the embattled foe!
Reached by the Christian king, repulsed, opprest,
Whelmed upon earth, and wounded through the breast,
The Saxon feels some chain upon his force ...
The eternal doom arrests his warlike course.
What can his rage against the voice of Heaven?
He dies ... and at the sight to madness driven,
Armelia forward darts, with desperate spring,
And lifts her dauntless weapon at the king.

LXXIX.

On his mailed arm the jav'lin breaks ... with speed
The astonished monarch turns aside his steed ...
And, in his troubled bosom, at the sight,
Horror, compassion, tender fear, unite ...
With mournful accent, with dejected mien,
"O save, my friends," he cries, "the unhappy Queen;
"O save Armelia from her dire despair!"
At once a hundred knights, with eager care,
Rush round the precincts of the holy fane;
And Montmor foremost of their pitying train.

LXXX.

The Queen has issued from the bloody walls ...
Her iron visor o'er her forehead falls;
And, led by chance, the traces of her sire
She seeks, where Maillan's wooded waves retire. (9)
There, in her sight, the hostile squadrons spread ...
"Charles will exhaust on this devoted head
"His rage," she cries, "and at my rival's feet
"Dragged as a slave, the monarch I shall meet.
"No throne, no rest, no fame, no husband there ...
"What! grace his triumph! that I will not bear!"

LXXXI.

None of this host obscure her figure knew...
Their brilliant standard strikes her angry view,
And, turning full on Heaven a look malign,
Frantic she rushes on the Christian line.
'Mid the thick javelins of the parting crowd,
Swift as the dazzling fire that cleaves the cloud
She darts, and silently receives their spears...
Thus in the flower, the beauty of her years,
Victim of blind revenge, Armelia dies...
Fast streams her blood, as low on earth she lies.

LXXXII.

Adalgise and his sire approach the scene,
Stained by the lifeless body of the Queen.
Some chosen friends around them still appear,
Who fled the Paladin's victorious spear.
Chased in their turn, the Christians leave the fight,
And reach the holy city in their flight.
Upon the battle-field the prince is stayed...
His loved, his hapless sister he surveyed:
Filled with fond tears he turns a brother's eyes
On Didier's face, and thus in anguish cries...
"Behold the fruit that perjured nuptials bear!
"Days filled with fear, and finished by despair!"

LXXXIII.

He speaks... two soldiers, raising from the plain,
Rest on a steed the body of the slain.
The monarch looks on either child; and sighs...
But, gathering soon his fallen energies,
He thus reanimates his drooping son...
"Think of our strength! we are not yet undone!
"Verona, Pavia, Beneventum's towers, (10)
"And proud Ravenna's mighty walls are ours:
"Haste! if these ramparts their defence bestow,
"Conquest is yet uncertain for the foe!"

LXXXIV.

With this last hope he flattered his distress...
All Rome, meanwhile, in grateful happiness,
Poured forth, and raised the voice of triumph high...
The new-born radiance of the dawning sky
Burst o'er the lofty Vatican, and shed (11)
A golden glory o'er its hallowed head.
Exulting thousands bless with fervent prayer
Illustrious Pepin's more illustrious heir.
The sacred standards, and the palms of fame,
Time-honoured eagles of the Roman name,
Clarions, and holy bells, the victory proclaim.

LXXXV.

Girt by his priests, with slow serene advance
The hoary pontiff meets the chief of France...
Near him the Cross shone awfully around,
And his blest temples the tiara bound.
At Adrian's sight, Charles, Egbert, and the peers,
With pious homage, that pure love endears,
Bend to their saintly head... "To thee I bring
"These honours, holy sire!" exclaimed the King...
"The God we serve our glory has restored...
"He, only, gave the Lombard to my sword.

LXXXVI.

"A heavenly messenger my valour led...
"High o'er these holy walls henceforth be spread
"The brazen record of that aid from Heaven, (12)
"When to our eyes the archangel's form was given.
"His breath inspired, his breath renewed my power...
"My solemn vow, at this auspicious hour,
"Is here fulfilled... then, holy father, deign
"Here, on my head, and on my warlike train,
"To call, with suppliant fervour, from above
"The unbounded blessing of Almighty love!"

LXXXVII.

The monarch speaks; and, bending to the ground,
Adores his guardian God with awe profound.
"Son," said the pastor, "He whose secret mind,
"Umpire of peace and war, controls mankind,
"By thee through earth has cast the guilty down,
"And to thy virtues grants a worthy crown."
He spoke; and suddenly to Heaven arise
Triumphant clamours, and redoubling cries,
"Glory to him, anointed of the Lord!
"Glory to Charlemagne! ... his conq'ring sword
"Has saved the Church and Rome, and they proclaim
"Augustus! Emperor! his lofty name."

NOTES.

NOTES TO CANTO XIII.

(1) *And raise their standard o'er the triple lake.*

The lakes of Como and Lugano, and the Greater Lake, are so near together that they only form one lake as it may be called. They are ten leagues from Milan.

(2) *The towers of Como to the right are past.*

Como is a city at the southern extremity of the lake of that name. Gravedona, or Gravedone, lies at the northern extremity.

(3) *They climb the heights where fair Olona flows.*

The Olona is a river which runs from the lake of Lugano to Milan.

(4) *When Brennus held Italia's conquered land,*
Valdona grew beneath the chief's command.

Brennus, general of the Gauls, made a descent upon Italy four centuries before our Saviour, conquered the Romans, and gave up Rome to pillage. The foundation of the town of Valdona, near the Greater Lake, is carried back to this period.

(5) *The heir of Pepin, and his chieftains brave,*
To Gothard's Mount their bannered lines advance.

Mount St. Gothard is a lofty eminence of the Alps, between Switzerland and Italy. The Ticino, or Tesin, the Rhone, the Rhine, and other rivers, take their rise in these cantons at a small distance from each other.

(6) *From Tesin's source to Aär's mountain wave.*

The Ars, or Aär, rises near Mount Grimsel, near the sources of the Rhone; it traverses Switzerland from south to north, and throws itself into the Rhine seven leagues from Basle, a famous city of Switzerland, upon the frontiers of France.

(7) *The Saxons pouring through Nemetia's lands.*

The Nemetians, a tribe of Germans, give their name to the province of Nemetis, which lies above Mentz, and along the bank of the Rhine. Haute-Rive (Alta-Ripa), Concorde (Concordia), Argente (Argentoratum, or Strasbourg), and Tabernia (Taberna), were four Roman colonies in the province of Nemetia.

(8) *In that vast forest's solitary reign.*

The Hercynian Forest; now called the Black Forest.

(9) *From Felda's heights descend upon the plain.*

Felda and Saverna lie towards the west, ten leagues from Strasbourg.

(10) *Three hundred barks to Cetia's port repair.*

Cetia, or Cetes, a town of Languedoc, on the Gulf of Lyons.

(11) *The peers whose fame Bieux and Morlas boast.*

All these lords took their titles from towns of Aquitain which they possessed, but for which they did homage to the duke of Aquitain.

(12) *The spreading wood of Ourasean they gain,*
Their squadrons halt on Haran's lofty plain.

Ourasan, Haran, Alcate, were three villages in the Pyrenees, upon the frontier of Lower Navarre. Oria is a little farther in Spain, near Maësca and the valley of Roncevalles.

NOTES TO CANTO XIV.

(1) *Now midst the wreck of Strasbourg's smoking towers.*

Argentum, or Argentoratum, was the name of the city of Strasbourg under the Romans.

(2) *By Clovis reared a Gothic church contained.*

The cathedral of Strasbourg is one of the most beautiful Gothic edifices now remaining; its steeple, adorned with open work and dentated, is of admirable lightness and elegance.

(3) *The walls of Salme and of Blamont they fill.*

Salme, Blamont, Remiremont, were towns of Lorraine, at a small distance from Strasbourg.

(4) *Of axure Blinde abandoning the banks.*

The Blinde is a little river which takes its rise between the towns of Colmar and Brissac, and falls into the Rhine about two leagues from Strasbourg.

(5) *For awful Adelinde a loyal love.*

Isambard, in some of the romances, is said to have addressed his vows to a wife of Charlemagne, and was banished, as the story runs, for some time from the court: when Charles, on a hunting party, having missed a wild boar which attacked him, a knight, clad in black armour, rushed out of the wood, darted before the king, and slew the wild boar. Being forced to discover himself, he was recognized to be Isambard, who from this moment was reinstated in favour, and returned to court. It is well known that love, loyal, irreproachable, and constant till death, distinguished the knights of those ages.

(6) *But Charles at Dixier's walls o'ercame his powers.*

Dizier, or St. Dizier, a town of Champagne, on the Marne, ten leagues from the Meuse, and fifty from Paris.

(7) *Through Soör's darkling wood pursues his way.*

The Soör is a little river which passes through the town

of Saverne, and empties itself into the Rhine, after a course of fifteen leagues. To the south of the town of Saverne, in a mountainous country, are the villages of Otterviller, Sucviller, Ollinviller, and Rossviller. To these names, so rebellious to poetry, has been affixed the general appellation of the defiles of Iller. From the same motive the country of Wellenen, midway between Saverne and Strasbourg, has been called Velant.

(8) *And makes our old romances young again.*

Ariosto, in spite of the brilliant attractions of his wandering muse, has diminished instead of increasing the fame of real heroes. He too often represents Charlemagne in a false or ridiculous light. Durandal is the well-known name of the sword of Roland.

NOTES TO CANTO XV.

(1) . . . . . *Isambard appears* . . . . . .
And marks the crest on Albion's helmet high.

Isambard recognizes the helmet of Charles Martel, which Adelinde had given to Albion in the tournaments of Paris.

The battle axe, the favourite weapon of the ancient Franks, was a double hatchet with a long handle and a sharp iron point.

(2) *The intrepid lancer in the Spanish ring.*

Exhibitions of bull fights yet form the delight of the Spaniards. A horseman, with lance in hand, enters the lists alone against a furious bull; wheels around him, repulses his attack with the point of his lance, and after having exhausted him in vain efforts, gives him up to a *Matadore;* that is, to a combatant on foot, armed with a small scarlet cloak, and a long poniard. The *Matadore* presents his cloak to the animal, leaps aside, and avoids his attack; then springing round him, he seizes the moment that the bull lowers his head to pierce him at one blow. In these dangerous encounters frequently the horsemen and the *Matadores* are overthrown; and sometimes, struck by the bull, they expire upon the arena.

(3) *Or in such signs high Heaven's approving voice, &c.*

Godfrey of Bouillon, the hero of the Jerusalem Delivered.

(4) *Where Aquileia's distant turrets stand.*

Aquileia, the capital of Frioul, formerly one of the richest cities of Italy.

NOTES TO CANTO XVI.

(1) *Opes the dread orier of Irmensul wide.*

The Druids used to inclose their human victims in a machine of wicker work, which they placed in the midst of the fire.

The forest of Venore or Vennar, the scene of this sacrifice, is on the borders of Alsace and Lorraine, ten leagues from the field of battle at Velant.

(2) *At length beheld thy gods, and blush with shame.*

Odin was a god of the northern nations, the peculiar object of worship among the Scandinavians. The great happiness promised by Odin to his followers in a future state, consisted in perpetual banquets, in which they were to drink from the skulls of their conquered enemies.

(3) *Kings sprung from him o'er twenty lands shall reign.*

This son of Witikind received at his baptism the name of Robert: he was the father of Robert the Strong, Marquis of France, great-great-grandfather of Hugh Capet, founder of the third line of French kings. Thus from Witikind descend the houses of Saxony, of Oldenburg, of Holstein, of Denmark, of Savoy, of Misnia, of Thuringia, of Brandenburg, of Anjou, of Burgundy, &c. &c. See on this subject the fifteenth plate of the excellent work of Mr. Charles Butler, which is enriched with many genealogical stems.

(4) *He to each Christian land shall counsel peace.*

Saint Louis undertook two crusades, and died before Tunis. Such was the confidence inspired by his reputation for probity, that he was often chosen as arbitrator in the disputes of his neighbours; and in his reign France enjoyed a long peace with the surrounding states.

(5) *His youth severe adversity shall train.*

In the reign of Louis XI. his step-father, Louis XII. then Duke of Orleans, experienced adversity. At length, through

the suspicions of that tyrannical prince, he was obliged to quit the court, and retire into Bretagne with the lords of his party. Pursued and overcome by the duke de la Trimouille, he was shut up in prison. On his advancement to the throne, the Duke de la Trimouille was afraid to appear at court. *Let him come*, said the good king, *it does not become the King of France to revenge the quarrels of the Duke of Orleans.* Adversity, exile, and prison, were the trials by which Heaven conducted to the throne Louis the Just, the father of his people.

(6) *But moved by courtiers' pleas, unjust and weak.*

Francis I. cannot be excused, on any grounds of morality or religion, for violating his oaths, and the treaties which he had signed previous to his release from his Spanish captivity. What could he do, it has been often asked, with so unreasonable an enemy as Charles V.? That which King John of France did: resume his fetters rather than exhibit the frightful example of a French and Christian king trifling with his word. Francis I. was in other respects adorned with the most brilliant qualities, generous, brave, and merciful. Had he known how to bear adversity, he would in fact, although often conquered, have presented the model of an accomplished prince.

(7) *And adding blasphemy to guilt, &c.*

The character of Catherine of Medicis is well known from the Henriade. Her son, Charles IX. stung by remorse, after the fatal night of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, perished in a horrible manner, the blood gushing out from the pores of his skin.

(8) *Before the King of Kings, &c.*

Henry IV. whose history and conversion at the close of the civil wars is known to every one.

(9) *Decked with the purple of illustrious Rome.*

The cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin.

(10) *Shall reign the greatest of the Bourbon line.*

Louis XIV. who gave his name to the age in which he lived.

NOTES TO CANTO XVII.

(1) *And ninefold rings of peopled cars around.*

The chariots of the Huns were ranged in circular lines, called rings, and served as ramparts in case of attack.

(2) *The Huns since Attila, stern conquerer, reigned, &c.*

Noricum and Pannonia were Roman provinces, now part of Austria and the Tyrol.

(3) *Ere Veder's lake the hordes of Theudon gain.*

The Vedersee is a lake two leagues from the Danube, and thirty from the Black Forest. Augusta Vindelicorum was the ancient name of Augsburg.

(4) *Thus did the impenetrable phalanx stand.*

The Grecian phalanx was famous for the weight of its battalions closely supporting each other, and presenting an almost impenetrable front of bristling spears.

(5) *This tribute then the fearful Cæsar paid.*

Attila having laid waste Thrace and the East, imposed a tribute on Theodosius the Younger, who thus threw the Huns back upon Europe. The orb of gold is thought to have made part of this tribute. The thunderbolt and tridents were the attributes of the three sons of Rhea, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto.

(6) *Happy, thrice happy, had that water blest.*

Clovis, at the battle of Tolbiac, made a vow to become a convert to the God of his wife Clotilda if he proved conquer-or. He gained the victory, and became a Christian, but he was as ferocious after baptism as before it, and his whole life was marked by assassinations.

(7) *A pontiff famed for eloquence divine.*

Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where she discovered the true Cross.

A part of this Cross was given by the Emperor Theodosius to St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who enriched it with precious stones, and placed it in the principal church of Milan, whence it was taken by the Huns. St. Ambrose seeing the Emperor Theodosius enter the church, upbraided him with the massacre of Thessalonica, too sad a stain in this prince's character, and refused him the sacrament.

(8) *I pardon now, no future grace expect.*

Charlemagne had repeatedly pardoned Tassillon, duke of Bavaria, but this feudatory prince as frequently revolted. He was at length deposed, and shut up in a cloister with his children. Bavaria was divided into small counties, which were bestowed by Charlemagne on his generals.

(9) *Constance's lake and Montfort's fertile plains.*

Montfort, the capital of the county of that name, is on the borders of the lake of Constance.

NOTES TO CANTO XVIII.

(1) *What storm has swept the lyre since late I sung?*

After a residence of seven years in Italy, political circumstances, in August 1810, obliged me, with my family, to quit the asylum I had chosen on the Tusculan mountains near Rome. For a fuller account of Tusculum see the twentieth canto.

(2) *By Rome to Charles in grateful record paid.*

In the portico of St. Peter's stands a colossal statue of Charlemagne. Marble and mosaic have vied with each other in preserving the resemblance of this hero, the protector of the holy see, and defender of the faith.

(3) *Prince, Pontiff loved of Heaven, O Clermont.*

During my residence at Rome, both my family and myself have been overwhelmed with kindnesses by his Holiness Pope Pius VII.

(4) *Thence by refusal stern and harsh repelled.*

Having embarked with my family at Civita Vecchia for Philadelphia, being driven by stress of weather into the road of Cagliari, and refused a momentary asylum in that country, I was obliged again to put to sea, and was detained by the English frigate the Pomona, Captain Barry, and conducted by him to Malta. From thence I was conveyed to England in the President, Captain Warren. Except having the liberty of continuing my voyage to the United States, I constantly received, while on board these frigates, all possible attentions and good offices, and am anxious thus to testify my gratitude to these brave and generous British sailors.

(5) *If not with arms, forgetful of my vows, &c.*

Charles held a parliament at Corbeni, near Soissons, when his brother Carloman died. The lords of Austrasia came to this parliament to offer Charles the crown which belonged of right to the sons of Carloman, and Charles had the weakness to accept it.

(6) *Stain with a tyrant's guilt his race unborn.*
At the date of this poem Charles had not yet any male issue. It was Hildegarde, daughter of a duke of Suabia, who afterwards brought him those princes who divided among them his vast inheritance.

(7) *And strikes, with lightning's force, on Adul's height.*
Adul, a high mountain among the Alps.

(8) *The dazzling lilies that surround her brow, &c.*
The Virgin is the protectress of France. Her crown of lilies will remind the reader of the fleurs de lis.

(9) *Atlas on Alps, on Atlas Hemus hurled.*
Atlas and Hemus, two high mountains, the one of Africa, the other of Thrace.

(10) *I basely left my brother to be slain.*
Charles and Carloman after the death of their father had united their forces to quell the disturbances in Aquitain, where they had both possessions. But Carloman, jealous of his brother's command in the field of battle, suddenly quitted him with all his army, and left him to bear the whole weight of the war.

(11) *Thus does the Almighty bind with tenderest chains.*
It seems to me that all Pagan mythology offers us nothing so beautiful as the divine doctrine of purgatory. May the poets who follow me in the career of Christian epic launch boldly into the regions of poetry opened to their genius by religion!

(12) *The pastoral mitre shall their heads surround.*
The two sons of Carloman were bishops. The eldest was bishop of Nice.

NOTES TO CANTO XIX.

(1) *Their woollen coat a cincture girds of felt.*

The *sayon* or *saye* was the ordinary vestment of this age, a short and strait kind of woollen tunic, bound by a girdle round the loins.

(2) *And fixed his royal seat in Aquitain.*

Aquitain was divided by Pepin between his two sons. We have no authentic historical account of this division, but it is thought Bordeaux, with the southern part, was left to Carloman.

(3) *Where flows the Sigman to the Curian bay.*

The Sigman (Sigmanus), now the Leyre, flows into the bay of Arcassin, formerly called the Curianus sinus, or Curian bay. Biganos, or Bigan, is a town at the mouth of the Leyre, below the fort of La Motte.

(4) *This Moor in Guadix' distant walls, &c.*

Guadix, a city of Grenada in Spain, near the source of the Guadalentin.

(5) *Where once the sea's tumultuous waves had flowed.*

On leaving Bordeaux on the south, we enter the sandy plains called the Landes of Bordeaux, which extend even to the frontiers of Spain.

(6) *Like Beersheba's wild desert seemed the Lande.*

Beersheba is the desert near Gaza where Hagar and her son Ishmael, being driven out by Abraham, fled for refuge. Ishmael became the chief of the Ishmaelites.

(7) *Full on your right the walls of Sere arise.*

Sere, at the extremity of the great Landes, was between the hamlets of Beunes and Ilots, nine leagues from Bordeaux.

NOTES TO CANTO XX.

(1) *From Belisarius' bridge to Peter's gate.*

The bridge of Belisarius is the same as the Point-Mole, formerly the bridge of Milvius. We enter upon the bridge by the tower of Belisarius, from which the name was borrowed. The Sacred Gate is the same as the Porta Angelica, so called because it leads to the church of St. Peter.

(2) . . . . . *aged monument,*
Whose vast and circular extent contains
The Master of the World's august remains.

The mole of Adrian, now Castel St. Angelo, is the only fortress of Rome: it is well known that it was built as the tomb of the emperor Adrian. It was adorned with innumerable columns and statues: being beaten down in the civil wars, it was converted into a strong castle.

(3) . . . . . *Aurelian's lofty towers,*
The proud construction of his peaceful hours.

A new range of walls was erected around Rome by the emperor Aurelian. The two extremities of these walls reached to the Tiber (See the plan of Rome). The Janicular Hill, and all that site, where in after times were built the Vatican and the church of St. Peter, lay without this range, on the other bank of the Tiber. The Popes joined this part of the city to the walls of Aurelian, by a fortification of less thickness; and the name of the city of Janus was given to it on account of the Janicular Hill which it enclosed.

(4) *O'er broken aqueducts and vasty plains, &c.*

In the way from Rome to Tusculum we traverse a plain covered with ruined aqueducts; proud indications of the grandeur of the ancient Romans. The Popes caused some of these aqueducts to be restored, in order to feed the magnificent fountains with which they embellished the city.

From the plain of the aqueducts we discover the hills of Frascati, of Albano, and, above, the hill of Tusculum.

(5) *From this high plain the wide-extending gaze,*
Rome, Tiber, Ocean, Alba's vale surveys.

When we arrive at the Table-Ground upon the Tusculan Hill, we discover the most beautiful prospect in the world. On one side the vast plain of Rome, washed by the Tiber, whose windings the eye pursues even to the sea; on the other, the fertile valley of Marino, and of Albano, covered with vines, olives, corn fields, orchards, and crowned with thick forests and eminences, to each of which is attached some heroic remembrance. It is at the foot of these forests, before the village of Rocca di Papa, that we see the ruins of the fortified castle of the Counts of Tusculum. A little valley separates the Tusculum of the middle age from the ancient Tusculum covered with imposing ruins: thus the most beautiful contrasts of art and nature are at once submitted to the eye of the observer.

(6) *What once was Sylla's dictatorial dome, &c.*

On the first level of the Tusculan Hill are the ruins of the palaces of Sylla and Lucullus. The Jesuits, when they possessed this property, caused these ruins to be excavated, and found among them many precious bronzes, and the famous pavement of Mosaic work representing a head of Medusa, which adorns a rotunda of the Vatican.

(7) *And where Cornelian ashes are interred.*

The two most considerable ruins which remain upon the Tusculan Hill are, first, the Academy of Cicero; it was there that he gave his lessons under the porticos, in imitation of the portico at Athens: second, the Funeral Circus of the Cornelian family, discovered by the author of Charlemagne in 1809.

(8) *Yes, He, the Christian's God, thy love supplied;*
He taught thy mind those deathless scrolls to frame,
That lend thy Tusculum her noblest fame.

The Tusculan discourses of Cicero derived their name from Tusculum, where they were composed. The ruins of the Academy of Cicero are still in the state in which they are here described. Among the monuments found in the

search of 1809, there was a statue of a senator bearing much resemblance to Cicero. The author intended to raise it in the centre of the Circus, where, meanwhile, he had caused to be erected a bust of this immortal man, at once the first of orators, the wisest of philosophers, and the saviour of his country.

(9) *—Gather from thy side, with awful hand,*
Sages and chiefs, who slept beneath thy sand.

The busts, statues, fragments, and inscriptions, found by the author, form a collection which was preparing for publication under the name of the Museum Tusculanum. This work will be resumed when circumstances permit.

(10) *Juno's ancient fort attracts our wondering eyes.*

Upon the highest summit of the Tusculan Hill, above the plain where the Cornelian Circus is now seen, was built a fortress, afterwards converted into a temple of Juno Lucina: the Roman women often went to make offerings to this protectress of pregnant matrons. The most precious of the statues discovered by the author in 1810, is the colossal statue, in Parian marble, of the virtuous Antonia, the mother of Germanicus, represented with the attributes of Juno Lucina, and in entire preservation. Near this statue was also discovered a bronze Apollo, half as large as life, of precious workmanship.

(11) *With Sylla's likeness, or, Rutilius, thine.*

The funeral circus of the Cornelians was closed in by a line of tombs, upon each of which was a statue. Three of these statues were entire, and the names of a Rutilia, the niece of Sylla, and mother of the famous Marcus Aurelius Cotta; of another Rutilia, the aunt of Fabius Maximus; and of Veneneius, a senator of the Cornelian family, were inscribed upon the plinths. Other truncated statues represented warriors in cuirasses, in whom Sylla and the Scipios were thought to be recognised.

(12) *Upon the summit of the sacred towers, ...*
Brightens the flame.

The fires lighted upon the towers of the Vatican and the domes of St. Peter were commonly a sign of festivity and rejoicing.

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(12) *Upon the summit of the [illegible]*
Brightness the [illegible]

NOTES TO CANTO XXI.

(1) *Along the Consul Cassius's ancient way.*

The Cassian way, so called from the consul Cassius, leads out of Rome into the north of Italy, and passes under the tower of Belisarius.

(2) *But seeks the sacred cupola in vain.*

On approaching Rome, the first object which strikes the eye at a distance is the immense cupola of St. Peter.

(3) *Stayed the rude Goth, &c.*

Wittigius, king of the Goths, was conquered by Belisarius, who, in order to defend the approaches to Rome, raised the tower which bears his name.

(4) *Up Marius' hill impetuous Didier strains.*

Mount Marius is about a mile from the Tiber, between the tower of Belisarius and the church of St. Peter. Marius gave the name to this colony as he encamped there when he came to attack Sylla. The Triumphal Way leads out of Rome towards the north, and passes to the left of Mount Marius.

(5) *Thus on the summit of the Cape of Storms*
The pilot gazes.

Above the Cape of Good Hope, formerly called the Cape of Tempests, rises the Table Mountain. Travellers inform us, when a little cloud, like a black point, appears above this mountain, it is a certain forerunner of a storm.

(6) *With watchful eye pursue the driving gale.*

A stormy and transient wind is called a squall. In ships, he who commands the manœuvres is armed with a silver whistle, the sounds of which penetrate to a great distance. No spectacle offers a more striking image of discipline and passive courage than the manœuvres of a man of war.

(7) *When ancient Cocles braved the hostile power.*

Horatius Cocles, alone, defended a bridge against a whole army. No one is ignorant of this incident, one of the finest afforded us in the history of the Roman republic.

NOTES TO CANTO XXII.

(1) . . . . . *The royal river's course.*

The Tiber, called the royal river, because it washes the city formerly the queen of a great part of the world, is inconsiderable in the volume of its waters. In the months of August and September, before the first autumnal rains, it sensibly decreases, but when the rains increase, it overflows, and inundates the lower streets of the city. This stanza shows the time that the action of the Epopea finishes.

(2) . . . . . *From Milvius' bridge, &c.*

The Ponte Mole, or the bridge of Milvius, is joined to the northern gate, more commonly called the Gate of the People, by a straight road of a mile in length, which now serves for a public walk, and which is called the outer course, because it is continued beyond the walls of the street of the course. The two sides of this road are formed by the walls of gardens; and from space to space, little country villas, which almost give it the air of a street. This avenue resembles a defile enclosed between two walls: it is a bad introduction to the capital of the world.

(3) *Chose Lysoi, &c.* . . . . . .

A Lysoi, or Lisoire, was the first chief of the Franks who received baptism after Clovis. This Lysoi passed for the origin of the House of Montmorenci. He who is here mentioned is one of the descendants of the first Lysoi.

(4) " *Mon Maure occis,*" *the conquering hero cried.*

The etymology of this illustrious family proceeded, it is said, from one Lysio, who, under the first race of kings, killed a Moorish chief in single combat, and who (as he overthrew him), exclaimed, " Mon Maure est occis," or, " Mon Maure occis." This cry became the name of his race.

(5) *With Aruns fought that son-destroying sire.*

The first Brutus, after having sacrificed his son to his am-

bition, governed the Romans. Tarquin, whom he had put to flight, came to besiege Rome; in the combat Aruns, the son of Tarquin, and the consul Brutus, fought hand to hand, and killed each other.

(6) *His shattered hauberk's mail* . . . .

The hauberk was an ancient cuirass, or coat of mail. There was a species of fiefs, who were called fiefs of the hauberk, and were obliged to serve the king in war.

(7) *Streaming from the brasset* . . . . . .

The brasset is that part of the armour which covers the arms of warriors.

(8) *And Janus' walls* . . . . . .

The Mount Janiculus, or Janicular, thus called from the name of Janus, is the hill which rises behind the Vatican, to the west of the tower of Belisarius. This part of the city is beyond the Tiber, and for this reason the author sometimes calls it the city of Janus.

(9) *The humid plain* . . . . . .

At all times the plains which surround the city of Rome have been considered unhealthy during the summer. The heat of the day, opposed to the dampness of the night, and the African winds, are regarded as the principle cause of the unhealthiness of these plains.

(10) *Deep vaults below* . . . . . .

Subterraneous caverns, as vast as the church itself, are dug under the church of St. Peter, and they are not less admirable than the rest of the work.

(11) *On the deep crater's circular abyss.*

The crater is the mouth of a volcano; after an eruption it sinks and forms a deep hollow; when we have ascended to the top of the crater, it is necessary to descend often to a considerable depth to approach the fissures from whence the smoke exhales.

(12) *Then hallowed Sion's far-famed columns* . . . . . .

The mutilated columns of marble brought by the emperor Titus from Jerusalem, decorated the ancient altar of St.

Peter, afterwards their proportions being too small for the immense altar of the new church, larger columns of bronze have been substituted, but made upon the same model; and the mutilated columns from Jerusalem are found only in one of the galleries under the cupola.

(13).... *new Abiram's guilty head*.....

Abiram, great grandson of Reuben, conspired against Moses, with Dathan and Corah. As soon as he presented himself before the altar the earth opened her entrails, and swallowed him alive, with two hundred and fifty of his accomplices.

NOTES TO CANTO XXIII.

(1) *The pontiff's faithful friend, he held his power*
From feudal sires in Toscanella's tower.

Toscanella, an ancient town of Etruria, at a short distance from the Mediterranean, in the states of the Holy See, is the country of the Gonsalvos; an illustrious family, whose chief place is still in that town.

(2) ..... *One chief, by Xenil's tide,*
Displaying erst the soldier's generous pride, &c.

The Xenil is the river that washes the city of Grenada in Spain: Gonsalvo of Cordova, surnamed the Grand Captain, conquered Grenada from the Moors for Ferdinand and Isabella, towards the end of the fourteenth century. He also subdued the kingdom of Naples; and Ferdinand having recompensed him with ingratitude, he ended his brilliant career in retirement.

(3) *Nor in our age has failed that honoured race*
To bear a son his ancestors to grace, &c.

The Cardinal Gonsalvo, for a long time minister of state to Pope Pius the Seventh, was charged with the negotiation of the concordat between France and the Holy See.

(4) *Long stood their altar in these realms of gloom, &c.*

Many of the catacombs of Rome are filled up; others are still accessible: they crossed each other in every direction under the city, and even beyond its circumference.

(5) *The valiant Grecian, in his glorious hour,*
Dug the deep avenue with toilsome power, &c.

It is believed that Belisarius, in his wars against the Goths, in which he retook Rome, caused the opening of one of the catacombs to be carried on until it issued under the tower which he had erected, in order to maintain a safe communication between that tower and the city.

(6) *Round stony vases, where that exiled band*
Crushed their rude grain, &c.

We still see in some of the catacombs large basins of stone, where the early Christians bruised their corn. Recesses in the shape of beds are dug in the standstone; crosses and indistinct numbers are traced upon the walls of these subterraneous cities.

(7) *A pious kiss the warlike Frank has given*
To these sad bonds . . . . . .

One of the principal entrances into the catacombs lies near the arch of Septimius Severus, at the side of the forum, in a grotto, where St. Peter was confined, and which bears the name of the Prison of St. Peter, or Carcere Mamertina. The chains of St. Peter were brought from Syria to Rome in the first ages of the Christian era; and afterwards deposited in a church called from their name St. Peter in vinculis—it is supposed that these chains were suspended in the Mamertine prison before the completion of the church destined to receive them.

(8) *There many a temple of some fabled God*
Rose into Christian fanes, &c.

We see in the forum, now called Campo Vaccino, some columns of the temple of Jupitor Stator; several churches which were formerly temples of the heathen gods; the remains of the Temple of Peace, of Concord, of Antoninus and Faustina, of Remus and Romulus, &c. &c.

(9) "*Here,*" *said Gonsalvo to the Frank,* "*we trace*
Heaven's anger launched upon the guilty Jew," *&c.*

Following the Triumphal Way, which traverses the whole length of the Forum, we pass under the arch of Titus, erected after the destruction of Jerusalem on both sides of the interior of this vault are sculptured upon the marble in bas relief, the spoils of the temple carried in triumph; the candlestick with seven branches; the tabernacle, &c. followed by captive Jews—the greater portion of these sculptures is yet entire.

(10) *Within the Flavian Circus' ample space.*

The Flavian Circus, or Coliseum, is the most astonishing

monument of ancient Rome which remains. By the care of of Pope Pius the Seventh, and of his minister the Cardinal Gonsalvo, that part of the Coliseum which threatened to fall has been for some time supported with an immense buttress, and the interior of the arcades has been cleared out. This work has been commemorated by an excellent medal from the hands of the artist Mereandetti.

(11) *The Franks advance; beside them, to the right,*
Maxentius' victor rears his arch in sight.

The triumphal arch of Constantine, which stands near the Coliseum, and whose base has been lately disencumbered from a mass of ruins, by the orders of the same pontiff.

(12) *Yes, glorious Rome! to whom the world was given,*
Such were thy Gods on earth, and such in Heaven.

The Coliseum served for the display of the barbarous fights of gladiators with wild beasts, &c. &c. In the times of persecution, the Christians were there given up to these ferocious animals, and their martyrdom formed the delight of Pagan Rome. This remembrance opens a vast field of reflection upon the false wisdom of the most famous era of ancient Rome, and upon the divine system of morals which Christianity has given to the world.

(13) *Now thrice five altars, in the Pagan ring,*
Receive the vows that suppliant mortals bring.

The interior of the Coliseum now presents fourteen altars ranged on each side of one larger altar; and serving for stations to the faithful.

NOTES TO CANTO XXIV.

(1) *And traversed Nîmes and Beziere's fruitful plains.*
Nismes and Beziers, cities belonging to the ancient province of Languedoc, in the centre of France.

(2) *On Aude's fair bank the embattled host I found.*
The Aude, a river which traverses the south of Languedoc, and throws itself into the gulf of Lyons. Montauban, an ancient city, half way from Narbonne to Bordeaux, chief seat of the famous house of Clermont.

(3) *When from Lavaur's wide plain at once arise.*
Lavaur, a city of Languedoc, below Montauban.

(4) *But when they reach the Save's unhappy banks.*
The Save, a river which traverses Gascony, from north to south, and throws itself into the Garonne, above the city of Toulouse.

(5) *Montalban then gives shelter to our kings.*
Montalban, being the chief seat of the house of Clermont, bears the name here of the castle of Clermont. Aymon, father of the paladin Renaud, Richard, and the other paladins of this family, are celebrated in the chronicles of this age.
Ariosto has often made his lyre resound with the name of this race of heroes; but its greatest honour will hereafter be, to have given to the Christian world the august Pontiff, now seated in the chair of Saint Peter.

(6) *Of the third watch the signal floats around.*
The Greeks and Romans divided the night into four watches, of three hours each.

(7) *And o'er the stream by Quintus' tower he bends.*

The tower of Quintus is within a mile of the tower of Belisarius, ascending the Tiber; it bears the name of its founder. It is supposed to have been built in the time of Belisarius.

(8) *Where Maillan's wooded waves retire.*

The Maillan is a rivulet, which throws itself into the Tiber near Rome, under the Mount Janiculus.

(9) *Verona, Pavia, &c.*

Didier, towards the end of the war, in effect shut himself up in the fortress of Pavia, where he was taken: and being conducted into France, he remained there several years. His son, Adalgise, retired to Constantinople, where he was raised to the dignity of a patrician.

(10) *Burst o'er the lofty Vatican, &c.*

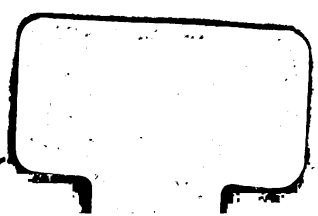
The Mount Vatican is the same as the Mount Janiculus. It is known that the Romans, in spite of all the revolutions they have been exposed to, have always preserved the glorious ensigns of their ancestors, S. P. Q. R. "*Senatus Populusque Romanus*," "The Senate and People of Rome." This they still preserve.

(11) *The brazen record of that aid from Heaven.*

The poet has here alluded to the bronze statue of the archangel St. Michael, which is raised on the summit of the castle of St. Angelo, formerly the mole of Adrian. The archangel is here represented with his hand on the flaming sword. He seems, on high in the air, to menace the persecutors of the Church, and to repeat the divine oracle:

"*Against the Church weak man shall ne'er prevail,*
"*Against the Church the gates of hell shall fail.*"

THE END.



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To which will be added an Appendix containing